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TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

BY

CHARLES A KINCAID, C.V.O., I C.S.(Retd.)

Officier de l'instruction publique

AUTHOR OF

"DECCAN NURSERY TALES," "THE INDIAN HEROES,"

"TALES FROM THE INDIAN EPICS,"

ETC ETC ETC

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To
ALL MY INDIAN FRIENDS,
WHOEVER AND WHEREVER THEY BE,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS
IN MEMORY OF THIRTY-FIVE HAPPY
YEARS SPENT IN INDIA
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

PREFACE

Most of these tales have already appeared in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. I am much obliged to the editor for his kind permission to republish them.

C.A.K.

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| I. KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA | I |
| II. PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI | 14 |
| III. RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR . | 29 |
| IV. RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR | 43 |
| V. RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR | 59 |
| VI. RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR | 73 |
| VII. JAY SHIKHAR . | 85 |
| VIII. BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA | 95 |
| IX. JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR | 107 |
| X. RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH | 123 |
| XI. PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR | 137 |
| XII. TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE | 151 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY . | 165 |

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

IT is my object in this and in ensuing chapters to bring before my readers the romantic side of Indian history by sketching the feats of India's most daring knights. Indeed in their splendid, reckless courage they equalled, if indeed they did not surpass, the adventurous companions of King Arthur and of Charlemagne.

My first hero shall be Krishna of Dwarka.¹ Worshipped to-day as a god by hundreds and thousands of Hindus, he was as a man the most renowned of all India's cavaliers; and it is as a hero of chivalry that I shall describe him. To give in full all his deeds of derring do would need far greater space than I can give, so I shall confine myself to the tale of his wedding with Rukmani, giving only such previous incidents in his life as are needed to make my present story intelligible.

¹ I would refer those of my readers, who would learn more of Krishna, to my book *Shri Krishna of Dwarka* (Tarapurwala & Co.)

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Krishna was the eighth child of Devaki, niece of Ugrasena, king of Mathura. Ugrasena's son, Kansa, had wickedly deposed his father, and had imprisoned his cousin, Devaki, and her husband Vasudeva. To save their little son, Krishna, from Kansa's murderous malice, Vasudeva contrived to hide him across the Jamna. As Krishna grew to manhood, he earned the gratitude of the countryside by ridding it of every kind of monster. In the end he returned to Mathura and, killing Kansa, he released his parents and restored Ugrasena to the throne of Mathura. Thereafter Krishna left Mathura, and on the shores of Kathiawar built a new town known as Dwarka. And this brings me to the beginning of my story.

After building Dwarka, Krishna was still in the prime of early manhood and wished to found a line of kings, who should rule his city after him. But what lady was worthy to wed this most splendid of heroes? It so happened that in all India there was one and one only, Rukmani by name, and the daughter of king Bhishmak of Vidarbha or Berar. She, too, was of an age when princesses were then

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

wont to be married, and the fame of her beauty both of face and form and of her countless accomplishments had spread everywhere, and had reached the ears of all at Dwarka, so that Prince Krishna fell in love with her without even casting his eyes on her. At the same time the fame of Krishna's valour and of his glorious deeds had reached the ears of the lovely princess of Vidarbha. She would weigh his merits against those of other Indian princes of the time, but Krishna's far outweighed them all. It was true that she had never seen any of them, and had to trust to rumour rather than to her own senses; but one day there came back to Vidarbha a party of merchants, who had been to Dwarka on business bent. Rukmani sent for and questioned them. So glowing was their tale of Krishna's stately beauty, of his splendid court and of his openhanded generosity, that Rukmani knew that he was the only prince in the world whom she would willingly marry. She had five brothers, and she begged them to help her to win him to be her husband. The four younger princes willingly agreed, but the eldest, Rukmi, was bitterly jealous

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

of the fame of the prince of Dwarka and, being all powerful at his father's court, he led the king to affiance Rukmani to another wooer, namely Prince Sisupal, son of the king of the Chedis.

When King Bhishmak told Rukmani to whom he meant to give her hand, she for a time gave way to despair. Still she was an Aryan princess, and she would not give up the man she loved without a struggle. Among her father's household was an aged and kindly Brahman, and she sought his help:

“Honoured and reverend sage,” said the princess, “I want your aid.”

“Most beautiful princess in the world, if there is aught I can do to further your happiness, I am yours to command.”

“Reverend sage, I want you to take a letter from me to Prince Krishna of Dwarka”

“The way is long and not free from peril,” said the aged Brahman, “nevertheless give me the letter and I shall deliver it.”

The princess had in secret already written the letter; she sealed and addressed it and

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

handed it to the Brahman. With it he touched his forehead, bowed and said: "Farewell, Princess, I shall be at Dwarka as fast as my horse can carry me."

The Brahman rode as fast as he could to Dwarka, and there asked for an audience with Prince Krishna. The doorkeepers answered him courteously and led him into Krishna's presence. The prince, who was seated on a throne all of gold, at once stepped down to greet the venerable and learned sage. Taking him by the hand, Krishna made him sit by his side. After the Brahman had rested, the prince ordered a meal for him and until his guest had eaten his fill, Krishna, with true Aryan courtesy, asked him no questions; then he said:

"Reverend Sir, may it be permitted to know the object of your visit?"

"My lord prince, I have no request of my own to make, for I am a Brahman and I am satisfied with little and I have far more than I need at the court of Vidarbha. But my king has betrothed his only daughter the Princess Rukmani to Prince Sisupal, son of the king of the Chedis, and I have

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

brought you a letter from her." So saying the Brahman took the letter from one of the folds of his garment and gave it to Krishna. The prince opened it and read it It ran as follows.

"My Lord Prince, I have heard so much of your beauty and prowess that I can think of nothing but you. Indeed I feel no longer shame nor fear of others' tongues. But do not *you* blame me, for if my conduct is bold and unmaidenly, you are the cause of it I have so often thought of you that your spirit pervades me wholly, and I am yours and yours only. Come, therefore, I pray you, to Vidarbha and take me as your bride Otherwise I shall become the wife of Prince Sisupal, whom I hate My marriage day has been fixed, so you cannot ask my father for my hand. Therefore come to Vidarbha before the day appointed for my wedding Bring with you a band of picked knights, and driving away Sisupal and the men with him, bear me off and make me your queen. You should not, however, storm the palace; for in the storm my father would die fighting I have a better plan On the day before the wedding, I shall go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of the goddess Ambika. While I am going to or returning from the shrine seize me and carry me away. Beloved lord, if you will not grant this my prayer, I shall die of sorrow hoping that perchance in some future life I may win as a husband him whom I have failed to wed in this"

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

Krishna read the letter through carefully and then again. At last he said to his Brahman visitor:

“ Venerable Sir, I love the Princess Rukmani with all my heart and soul, and right gladly I would have wedded her; but her eldest brother, Rukmi, hated me, so he led the king to promise her hand to Sisupal. Now that she has called on me to save her from an unloved marriage, I shall go to Vidarbha, and just as the wind bears away a burning spark, so I shall bear her away from her father’s city to Dwarka.”

He then asked of the Brahman the date of the marriage, and learning that it was close at hand, he bade his ^{charioteer} Daruka, harness the four swiftest steeds in his stable. Daruka obeyed, and in a few minutes the prince’s four best horses stood harnessed at his palace porch. Krishna took the old Brahman with him, and galloping all day and most of the night, they reached the land of Vidarbha just in time. As Rukmani had advised, the prince took with him a body of picked Yadav knights from Dwarka.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

On reaching the Vidarbha border, Krishna learnt that the princess was to be wedded in King Bhishmak's town Kundinapuri. Thither he went, and reached it the morning before the day fixed for the wedding. The town was holding high festival, and flags and banners flapped gaily from the burghers' windows or flew in the wind from flagstaffs on the roofs. The streets were bright with arches and with wreaths of flowers. Water-carriers with skins of scented water sprinkled the roads to lay the dust. Inside the royal palace King Bhishmak had worshipped the gods, his forefathers and the Brahmans, and had feasted the latter with noble hospitality. The Brahmans, in turn, had poured blessings on Bhismak's daughter. In the meantime Prince Sisupal, accompanied by his royal father, came near the walls of Kundinapuri; when their coming was made known to King Bhishmak he went out with a great escort to do his future son-in-law honour. In the meantime Rukmani was in despair. It was the eve of her wedding day and the old Brahman had not returned. She sat in her room in the palace, wondering whether her

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

letter had reached Prince Krishna and what he had thought of it. Her heart was torn with fear that he might despise her for writing and with hope that he might still come in time to stop her hateful marriage.

Suddenly her left arm, her left eye and her left thigh began to throb. These, as the princess knew, were happy omens, and she hardly felt surprise, when a few minutes later, one of her handmaids announced the aged Brahman, whom she had sent to Dwarka some weeks before. As he entered, she looked anxiously at his face. When she saw that it was serene and happy, her heart filled with joy and hope.

“Pray, Reverend Sir, tell me that all is well and that Prince Krishna is coming.”

“Nay, noble princess,” replied the Brahman “the prince is already come, and is now in Kundinapuri.”

With these words he began to tell her all that had passed at Dwarka.

Prince Krishna did not attempt to hide his coming. He sent riders ahead to announce it to King Bhishmak, who went out to meet him and his party. After many courteous

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

greetings, the king, the prince and the Yadav
knights entered together the festive city.

The same evening Rukmani went out, as she had written to Krishna, to visit the shrine of the goddess Ambika. A large escort of well-armed serving men guarded her palanquin, and many well born young women went from Kundinapuri with her also. On reaching the temple, she entered the inner shrine and with the aid of Brahman ladies performed all the worship due by a betrothed girl. Then she prayed under her breath "O goddess Ambika, if I have done aught to win your favour, grant that Prince Krishna and not Sisupal be my husband!"

She put on the lap of the goddess a cocoanut and a handful of flowers. Then she waved a lamp round the goddess' head and received in return her gift and the blessings of the Brahman ladies. Lastly, hand in hand with two of her girl friends, she went outside the temple. On the steps she stopped for a moment, looking for Prince Krishna's chariot, which, as she knew, carried aloft a banner with an eagle on it. Suddenly she was aware of it close to her, for Krishna saw that his

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

chance had come, and had skilfully guided his horses near the temple steps. Rukmani stepped aside from the palanquin and gave her hand to Krishna. Without effort the prince lifted the lovely girl into his chariot. Then touching his team with his whip, he guided them with such skill through the crowded streets, that before anyone could stay them he and Rukmani were out of the city; and Krishna's splendid horses were galloping towards Dwarka.

Sisupal, who was not far away and had watched Krishna's flight with Rukmani, collected hastily some of his followers and pursued ^{away} the fugitives at full speed. But Krishna's Yadav knights lay in wait and charged them, as they strove to issue from the narrow streets of Kundinapuri. Other Yadav knights fell upon Sisupal's hindmost men and slaughtered them as a few wolves slaughter a great flock of sheep. Rukmani's brother, Rukmi, undaunted by Sisupal's failure, broke away and, driving furiously, overtook his sister and her captor. Krishna's attendants could easily have cut him down, but the chivalrous prince challenged him to single combat instead.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Rukmi accepted the challenge and tried to shoot Krishna with an arrow; but the prince shot down in turn Rukmi's horses and his charioteer, and then severed the bowstring that he was trying to pull. Rukmi sprang from his chariot and drew his sword. Krishna did the same, but Rukmani begged him not to kill her brother. So, parrying his enemy's blows with cool skill, Krishna struck him a blow on the head with the flat of his sword and knocked him senseless. As he lay unconscious, Krishna tied him up with his own scarf. Then relenting, he let him go; but Rukmi was so sore with shame at his defeat and the loss of his beautiful sister, that he would not return to Kundinapuri, but went to a distant land and founded the city of Bhojakataya.

After their slaughter of Sisupal's men, Krishna's knights overtook their prince and his bride. Proud of their achievement, all went back joyfully to Dwarka. There the townspeople greeted them with shouts of joy and triumph. Their marriage was celebrated with such pomp and splendour as no marriage in India has known before or since,

KRISHNA, PRINCE OF DWARKA

and although these events happened more than three thousand years ago, Indian mothers still tell the tale of the wedding of Krishna and Rukmani to their children, and pray that their sons may grow up as strong and brave as Krishna and their daughters as beautiful and loving as Rukmani.

II

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

At the end of the twelfth century after Christ, the brilliant civilisation of mediaeval India had reached its height. The great land was divided into various kingdoms, ruled by Rajput chiefs. They were ever at war with each other, but they fought their wars with such noble laws of chivalry that the peasantry under them suffered little or no harm. Their code forbade them to plunder the farmer or to maltreat their women or servants. Kshattriyas only fought with Kshattriyas. War was their glorious task in life. Let others cultivate the soil and grow crops and amass wealth unmolested. The Rajput must pass his life sword in hand, and end it gloriously on the battlefield.

Unhappily there were signs in plenty that grave perils threatened this gallant civilisation, and that unless the Rajput princes united, they were sure to fall victims to the fierce barbarians beyond their frontiers. In the

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

eighth century Sind had been shorn away from India by the Arab leader Mahomed Ibn Kasim. At the beginning of the twelfth century Mahmud, the Afghan king of Ghazni, had repeatedly held to ransom Hindu cities, and had forced his way as far as Somnath, on the distant coast of Kathiawar. Yet the high spirited Rajputs paid no heed to the perils that menaced them. Had not Bappa Rawal of Mewar repulsed Mahomed Ibn Kasim, when he tried to force his way into Rajasthan? Had not Bhimdev so harassed the retreat of Mahmud of Ghazni, that he barely escaped into Sind with his life, losing all his plunder and most of his army? Thus scorning the cloud that gathered in the skies above them, the Rajput chiefs gave themselves up to the joys of battle and to their chivalrous contests with each other. The flower of that knightly and splendid race was at this time Prithviraj or Rai Pithora, the Chauhan king of Delhi. To quote the words of the epic bard Chand Bardai:

“ In Kanauj, Ghazni and Anhilpura the angel of death shouted aloud with joy the day that Prithviraj was born.”

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Prithviraj's possessions were wide indeed. He had inherited as his father's son the throne of Ajmir and thereafter his kinsman, Ananda Deva, the Tomara prince of Delhi, left him the great town, that for so many centuries has been the capital of India. It was once known as Indraprastha, and was founded by the glorious and godlike Yudhishthira; but a curious legend relates how it changed its name. When Yudhishthira and his brothers and their common wife, Draupadi, were setting forth together to seek the snow peaks of the Himalayas, they planted in Indraprastha an iron pillar to carry on their memory through all time. For hundreds of years it stood unmoved and unchanged by sun or rain until Indraprastha became the fief of a prince so wicked that the iron pillar of Yudhishthira became loose in its socket of granite. Heavenly voices urged the Tomara chief to drive from the city of the Pandavas a prince so unworthy. The Tomara chief did so, and reigned over Indraprashta in his stead, but the iron pillar never grew firm again, and to-day it still moves in its socket. Its new ruler, therefore, changed the city's name

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

to Dilhi, or the unstable, and as Dilhi or Delhi it is known to this day.

Among the other greatest princes of the time was Samarsing, the Rana of Chitor. Chand Bardai has described him as "brave, cool, and skilful in the fight; prudent, wise and eloquent in council; pious and decorous on all occasions. In the line of march neither augur nor bard could better explain the omens, no captain in the field could more skilfully dress the squadrons for battle, none could guide his steed or use his lance with more address."

At Kanauj ruled Jaya Chandra the Rathor. In spite of his vast domain and boundless wealth he was not esteemed as were Prithviraj and the Rana Samarsing; for when Mahmud of Ghazni had raided India, the father of Jaya Chandra had stooped to buy off the barbarian instead of driving him back to his own savage mountains. Nevertheless Jaya Chandra claimed to be overlord of all India, and resolved to impose his suzerainty on all the other Rajput chiefs, by celebrating the Swayamvara of his daughter Sangagota, a great festival in which the maiden princess was to choose her husband from among the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

assembled princes. All the chiefs of India yielded to the claims of Jaya Chandra, some in the hope of winning his powerful friendship, others with the desire of winning his daughter's hand. Prithviraj and Samarsing haughtily refused to attend the Swayamvara of Sangagota, pleading the business of their states. Jaya Chandra knew that their pleas were mere pretexts, and to revenge himself he caused to be made images of both Prithviraj and Samarsing and placed them as door-keepers at the door of the arena.

On the morning of the Swayamvara all the bravest and most splendid princes in Hindustan seemed to be gathered together in Kanauj. All round the seats for the spectators rose in tiers; below was the arena wherein the princes were to show their skill in knightly exercises, hoping thereby to win the favour of the lovely princess, who sat unveiled by Jaya Chandra's side. When the suitors had shown their prowess in various feats of arms, it fell to the Princess Sangagota to choose as her lord him whom she deemed the noblest, the most skilful and the handsomest youth among the assembled chivalry.

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

Sangagota felt no liking for any of the gallant youths in the arena. Her heart had already been given to Prithviraj the Chauhan, her kinsman on her mother's side, and the most recklessly daring of all the lords of Hindustan. She had sent him a message that she hoped that he would come to Kanauj, so that she might choose him as her husband; and he had sent back a message that he would go to Kanauj even though Heaven and Hell joined together to thwart him. Jaya Chandra gave Sangagota a garland of flowers. This she was to place round the neck of the youth whom she chose to be her husband. Her eyes swept round and round the arena and looked anxiously at the doors of the main entrance. At last, among the crowd near them, she saw someone make a sign to her, and she recognised him as a trusted comrade of Prithviraj Chauhan. At once she felt certain that all was well. Passing scornfully by the suitor whom Jaya Chandra wished her to choose, she deftly slipped through the wide doors of the arena and flung her garland over the stone image, put up in mockery of Prithviraj. There was a rush, a

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

cry from the crowd, as the prince himself, splendidly mounted, dashed through it. Bending down he lifted the wholly willing Sangagota to his saddlebow and for life and death rode westwards to Delhi. Prithviraj was no callow gallant reckless of consequences. He knew that he would be pursued from Kanauj to his very gates, and would assuredly forfeit his life and probably the princess' if he were overtaken. Thus on his journey to Kanauj he had travelled by night, as he did so he had posted soldiers at each watercourse and at each ravine that he had passed. Now as he galloped homeward he called to each group that they should fight to the last man, so as to hinder the pursuit. He had also posted fresh horses every twenty miles, so that he and his bride should not be caught because their steeds broke down. As he galloped ever westwards he heard the horsehoofs of Jaya Chandra's pursuing cavalry. Then their clang would cease as the outposts of Delhi met and fought the Rathors. Again the sound of the galloping horsemen would reach his ears, when the pursuers had forced their way over the dead bodies of the Chauhan guards.

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

Nevertheless each combat gave to Prithviraj a respite, and two or three days after he left Kanauj the sentries on the Delhi walls saw the prince reeling on his horse, as he bore in front of him the fainting form of the Princess Sangagota. They threw open the gates; the prince, with a supreme effort, sprang off his horse and carried his unconscious burden up the steep entrance. His subjects and soldiery greeted him with wild shouts of delight; but an old family priest pushed his way into the prince's presence and repeated a Hindi couplet, that may thus be translated.

“Great fame you've won; you've made a queen
your own.

You've lost the sinews of the Delhi throne.”

The priest felt sure that the time was not far distant when his lord would sorely need the help of those gallant men whose bodies lay scattered along the road between Delhi and Kanauj.

Jaya Chandra affected to overlook the incident and sent to Prithviraj a mission, offering to the king terms of friendship and bestowing on him a handsome wedding gift as the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

husband of Sangagota. Prithviraj gladly accepted the proffered terms, and in the joys of his new marriage he forgot the fearful dangers that threatened his country. Only two years before the Afghan king, Mahomed Ghori, who had seized Lahore, had advanced with a large army against Delhi. Prithviraj, with contingents from other Rajput States, had at once marched to Sthaneshwar, the plain where according to the Mahabharata, the Pandavas had defeated their cousins, the Kauravas. It was holy ground to every Hindu, and Prithviraj had inflicted so severe a defeat on Mahomed Ghori that he had fled back to Kabul and had there sat for a whole year in mourning robes, lamenting his disgraceful overthrow. Indeed, he had given up all hope of conquering India from the confederate Rajput clans, when in 1193 he received a pressing message from Jaya Chandra to attack the Chauhan king of Delhi, promising, if not active support, at any rate neutrality. Mahomed Ghori threw aside his mourning robes and began the re-organisation of his army, substituting for many of his Afghan infantry, troops of Turcoman horse the better to meet the fiery charges of the

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

Chauhan knights. While the Afghan barbarian was thus forging a new and more formidable weapon with which to conquer India, Prithviraj and his bride thought of nothing but each other. The very day that Mahomed Ghori began his southward march Prithviraj dreamt a horrible dream. He told it to Sangagota when he awoke:

“ Last night while I slept I saw a beautiful woman come out of the darkness and seize me; then she assailed you, and while we were struggling with her, a mad elephant, huge and hideous as a demon, bore down on me. I woke up and saw neither lovely woman nor monstrous elephant; but I am still panting with excitement. I know not what the gods have decreed.”

Sangagota smiled and said, “ Victory and Fame to my lord! Of glory and pleasure who has drunk so deeply as you? To die is the fate not only of all men, but of all the gods. Men and gods alike long to rid themselves of life as of an old garment; but to die well is to live for ever. Think not of self but of immortality. Let your sword hew in pieces your foes, and if you

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

fall I shall soon be in the next world with you."

Prithviraj sent for his family priest. He declared that the dream was one of ill omen, but that the evil things foretold therein could be averted by offerings to the deities. He wrote out a profound Sanskrit incantation, which the king folded carefully in his turban. A thousand brass vessels full of fresh milk were poured out in libations to the sun and moon. Ten buffaloes were sacrificed to the ten directions and gifts were distributed to the Brahmins.

At the same time messengers were sent throughout northern India for help. But of the great Rajput rulers only Samarsing of Chitor went to Prithviraj's help with troops. With these and his own army Prithviraj marched again to Sthaneshwar, where two years before he had defeated the same enemy. But most of the gallant knights, who on that glorious day had won the victory, had fallen to guard Prithviraj's retreat on the road from Kanauj to Delhi; and the king remembered the old priest's saying that in his reckless quest of fame and love he had lost the sinews

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

of Delhi. Sangagota, too, was filled with fears at her lord's going, and said sadly:

“ I shall see him in the mansions of the sungod, but never again within the walls of Delhi.”

Prithviraj mustered a great array along the bank of the Saraswati river on the Sthaneshwar plain. On the other bank was drawn up the Afghan host and the two armies faced each other for several days, seeking each for a favourable chance to attack. Suddenly one cloudy morning, just before dawn, Mahomed Ghori crossed the Saraswati and attacked the Rajput camp. The outposts fled back to the main body, but the Chauhan king soon restored order, and by noon had gained the upper hand. Then Mahomed Ghori ordered his Turcoman horse to perform the manœuvre that for two centuries had given them countless victories. It was a skilfully feigned retreat. The centre of the Turcomans gave way, so as to encourage the foe in the belief that they were winning; but instead of riding off the field, the retreating Turcomans took up a fresh position on the wings. Thence they attacked their pursuers on both flanks. Once

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN OF DELHI

“ since my lord went forth to battle. How gladly now shall I end my vigil! ”

With his turban on her lap she mounted, smiling, the funeral pyre, and swiftly the flames released her spirit, so that it might join her husband's in the far off regions of the sungod.

Her father, Jaya Chandra, king of Kanauj, was soon to repent of his wickedness in calling for the Afghan's help against his son-in-law. Mahomed Ghori, after the victory of Sthaneshwar, pressed on eastwards, massacring as he went. Jaya Chandra at first sent heralds of peace, then messengers to protest, and finally gathered an army to resist the invader. The Turcoman mercenaries whom he had enlisted at once deserted him and joined the Afghans. With his faithful Rathors only he faced the victorious barbarian. He was utterly overthrown, and while trying to lead the remnant of his beaten followers in safety across the Ganges, he was swept away by the current and drowned. After his fresh victory Mahomed Ghori proclaimed himself emperor of Delhi. The Rathors fled to Mandor, and founded what grew afterwards into the kingdom of

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Jodhpur. Samarsing's widow, Karamdevi, the mother of his minor son, Karna, saved Mewar by defeating the Afghans near Chitor. The kingdom of the Chauhans passed away for ever; but the name of Prithviraj is still as fresh as in his own day through the songs of northern India and the epic of the poet Chand Bardai

III

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

ONE spring morning towards the close of the thirteenth century Chitor, the capital of Mewar¹, was surrounded by an Afghan army led by the Afghan emperor, Ala ud din Khilji. The cause of his invasion was not political, but his desire for Padmani, the handsome bride of the regent, Bhimshi. Her lord, a Sisodia Rajput, naturally refused to surrender her, and the siege began. Some months passed, but the besiegers made little progress. Then the emperor sent an offer to the regent:

“ Let me but see the lovely princess in a mirror, then I shall be satisfied and raise the siege.”

The regent agreed and, going to meet Ala ud din at the main gate of Chitor, he escorted him to the palace; there the emperor was allowed to gaze in a looking glass on the

¹ Mewar is now known as Udaipur, and is the chief State in Rajputana

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

beautiful features of the regent's wife. When Ala ud din was returning, the prince Bhimshi, wishing to equal the emperor's trustfulness, accompanied him to the foot of the hill on which the city stood. The Afghan had counted on just such a piece of noble folly and had the regent arrested by a guard placed in ambush at that very spot. Having achieved this villainy, the barbarian sent from his camp a second message to Chitor.

"Give me Padmani and I shall release Prince Bhimshi."

The garrison pretended to consent, and a long train of seven hundred litters, said to contain Padmani, her ladies and attendants, wended its way down the slopes of the fortress to the camp of Ala ud din. Nearing the imperial tents, the litters opened and discharged not the women of Chitor, but its bravest defenders. They rushed, drunk with bloodshed, at the Afghan guardsmen and fought until they were all cut down. In the meantime Prince Bhimshi mounted a swift horse and rode back for life or death to Chitor, where he rejoined Padmani, who had never left it. The garrison suffered heavy losses in

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

this fight; but the losses of the imperial troops were greater still, and the emperor, with a sadly diminished army, abandoned the siege and returned to Delhi.

Some years later Ala ud din, who had never forgotten his defeat, raised a fresh army and marched into Rajputana. To win divine favour, he ordered all the barrels and bottles of forbidden liquor in his cellars to be emptied into the Delhi streets. The Sisodia Rana Lakshmansing, grown to manhood, defended Chitor himself, but for all his valour the besiegers' lines came nearer and nearer to the city. The rains broke and the garrison were hard pressed. One breathless night the Rana lay on his bed unable to sleep. He heard a voice cry: "I am hungry! I am hungry!" Looking up he saw close to his bed the giant form of the guardian goddess of Chitor. The Rana protested:

"How can you be hungry, when you have drunk the blood of eight thousand of my noblest soldiers?"

"I need the blood of kings, not of common men. I must drink the lifeblood of twelve rulers of Chitor or it will pass from the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

sovereignty of the Sisodia house." With these words the vision vanished.

The next morning the Rana called a council and told his chiefs what he had seen. They were so hard of belief that he ordered them to watch with him through the following night. At midnight the goddess reappeared and again demanded the lifeblood of twelve kings, all of whom had reigned for three days. It was agreed the Rana's twelve sons should assume the crown in turn and on the fourth day of their reign die in battle. The eldest son, Prince Ursi, claimed the right to reign and die the first of all. The claim was conceded and he reigned for three days and then died on the field of honour. The second son, Prince Ajising, was his father's favourite. The Rana insisted that he should assume the crown last of all. Ajising perforce obeyed, and saw in turn his ten younger brothers rule for three days and die on the fourth. At last Ajising alone was left. The Rana could not bear to see his favourite go forth to his death, and announced to his garrison openly.

"Now I devote myself to Chitor," and in

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

spite of his son's protests and appeals, he went out and fell fighting the barbarian.

Before the Rana died in battle his chief care was to provide for the succession of the Sisodia line. He sent Ajising at night out of Chitor. With the prince went his two sons, his nephew, Hamir, and a few attendants. By great good fortune they slipped through the Afghan lines and found safety in the forests of Kelwara. The Rana's parting words to Ajising were:

"If you find Hamir, the son of your elder brother, Prince Ursi, worthy of the crown of Chitor, you must give it to him rather than to your own sons; for it was Prince Ursi's right to succeed me, and Hamir has inherited it."

"If I find him worthy," replied Prince Ajising, "he shall succeed in preference to my own sons."

On the fourth day after the escape of Prince Ajising the Rana and his remaining soldiers put on saffron robes and, flinging wide the gates of Chitor, were slaughtered to a man, fighting the Afghans on the plain below. Ala ud din entered the defenceless city in triumph,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

thinking of the moment when Padmani would at last be his. He found the streets deserted and the houses empty. Led by Padmani herself, the women of Chitor had entered an underground cavern and there committed *sati* to escape dishonour

In the forests of Kelwara Ajising kept alive the Rajput spirit, and he appointed his nephew, Hamir to be his successor in preference to his two sons; for Prince Hamir had proved himself worthy, as the following tale will show. One day a robber baron called Munja Balaicha, who had renounced his allegiance to a Rana, who no longer owned Chitor, raided Ajising's camp and in the course of the foray wounded the Rana in the head. The injured chief called on his two sons, Ajamsi and Sajansi, to avenge him. They shrank from the task. He then sent for Hamir. The gallant boy cried:

"If I succeed, expect me in a few days; if I fail, you will never see me again!"

A few days later he rode back through the Kelwara pass with Munja Balaicha's head ^{“dangling} from his saddle. He put the trophy at his uncle's feet and said: "Recognize the

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

head of your foe." The king lifted the gory object and with a bloodstained finger marked the tika or sign of loyalty on Hamir's forehead. Of Ajising's two sons, one Ajamsi died in the woods of Kelwara. The second the Rana sent with a band of serving men to carve out a new kingdom in the south. In the Deccan Sajansi became a soldier of fortune and one of his descendants was the Liberator of the Maratha nation, the immortal Shivaji.

On Ajising's death Hamir became Rana of Mewar, and proved himself as great as any of his forbears; nor is this to be wondered at, if his parentage be known. Some years before the fall of Chitor, prince Ursi went with his attendants to hunt wild boar. One huge animal took cover in a field of maize, some ten or twelve feet high. A tall but ill-dressed Rajput girl came up and asked if she could help to drive it out. They told her that the boar was lurking near the platform from which the watchman scared the birds from the corn. Forcing her way through the high maize, she climbed on the platform, sharpened with a knife a long maize stalk, and, watching

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

her chance, drove it clean through the boar's body. Descending from the platform, she dragged its carcass out of the maize crop. The prince was astonished at her strength and courage, and congratulated her on her feat. He then went to eat his morning meal by a little stream that flowed close to the maize field. Suddenly the prince's horse gave a leap, as if struck. Its groom reported that a clay pellet from the young woman's sling, thrown to frighten the birds, had broken the horse's leg. The girl was greatly distressed, but since it had been an accident, the prince, wondering more than ever, forgave the young woman. After his meal, the prince mounted a second horse and with his train went in another direction in pursuit of game. That evening they again met the Rajput maiden, carrying on her head a pan of milk and leading two buffaloes, a leading rope in either hand. One of the prince's attendants wagered that he would make her spill the milk or let go one of the buffaloes. He galloped past her, as close as he could. The young woman was quite undismayed. She contrived to twist one of the leading ropes round the horse's legs

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

and brought it and its rider to the ground. At the same time she neither spilt the milk, nor let go either buffalo. The prince, filled with admiration, sent for the girl and asked who she was, and learnt that she was the daughter of a Chandano Rajput, who lived close by. He then sent for the father and asked for the girl's hand in marriage. At first the proud old Rajput, who treated the prince as an equal, refused the offer; but eventually his wife over-persuaded him and very reluctantly he gave his consent. The eldest son of this marriage was the Rana Hamir.

Although Hamir had succeeded to the throne of Mewar, yet without Chitor he could not deem himself a real king. He organized bands of irregular horse, who so terrorized Mewar that the land fell out of cultivation, save in the neighbourhood of Kelwara, where Hamir was recognised as ruler. At last Maldev, a renegade Rajput, who held Chitor for the Afghan emperor, wove a vile scheme for the disgrace of Hamir. He sent to the Rana a courtly message, offering him his daughter's hand. The Rana accepted joyfully, for he saw thereby a chance to recover his ancient

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS.

city. His comrades warned him that treachery underlay the fair offer, but with reckless courage he exclaimed:

“ My feet shall at last tread the rocky steps that my ancestors once trod. A Rajput must face reverses; what matter if one day he flees from his home, covered with wounds, if the next he re-enters it with a crown on his head! ”

By the terms of Maldev’s offer the Rana was to enter Chitor with only five hundred men. As he came near the city he saw no arches of flowers over the outer gates. His attendants again hinted at treachery, but the Rana rode up the steep path into the city. No maidens threw from the parapet flowers on the bold rider or mocked him with laughing songs. He entered the palace where Maldev, his son and other chiefs awaited him with folded hands. The bride, deeply veiled, was brought into the hall, but instead of the elaborate wedding rites of the Sisodia clan, a priest merely knotted their garments together and joined their hands. Then bridegroom and bride were left alone. Hamir lifted her veil, expecting to see a hideous monster, but saw

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

instead a lovely woman. He was delighted, and would have taken her in his arms; but she checked him and said: "You have been foully cheated, my king, I am a widow." Maldev had thought that Hamir would openly resent the imposture and thus give Maldev an excuse for arresting him. The Rana was too wary for that. His wife, too, was not only young and beautiful, but a maiden, for her husband had died when she was a child. Moreover she told him that if he but listened to her, he could regain Chitor.

"Ask as my dowry the services of the writer Jal, and he and I shall scheme together for you."

Hamir agreed, and to Maldev's surprise seemed perfectly satisfied with his marriage. He asked for and obtained Jal's services, and he and his wife and his new clerk went together to Kelwara.

Two years later the queen sought and obtained leave to shew her year old infant to the goddess of Chitor. She went there with Jal and five hundred men; and in her father's absence she won over Maldev's gar-¹ rison to her husband's cause, and Jal threw

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

open the gates that Hamir and his army might enter. Thus once again the banner of the Sisodias flew over the battlements of their ancient home.

It was, however, one thing to recover Chitor; it was another to hold it. There was but one sure way, and that was to regain the sword of Bappa Rawal, the founder of the royal line. It had been forged by Vishvakarma, the artificer of the gods, in secret places unknown to men deep under the surface of the earth, and it had been buckled on Bappa Rawal by the goddess Bhawani herself. So long as the Rana of Mewar wore it, Chitor could defy all its enemies. Had Rana Lakshmansing taken it into his last fight, Ala ud din might not have triumphed. Fearful of losing the sword for ever, Lakshmansing had given it to Padmani to carry with her to that cave where she and the other Sisodia women were to burn themselves alive. Hamir had the cave unsealed and strode boldly in. The flickering torch in the Rana's hand lit up faintly the dark passage that stretched in front of him. At last he came to a spot where the cave opened out. In the middle of the

RANA HAMIR OF CHITOR

Rana Hamir saw the earth goddess, half worn in lassitude, sitting surrounded by her serving women. In front of them a cauldron simmered over a fire, of which the dim flames made the gloom seem deeper still.

"What will you, Rana Hamir?" asked the earth goddess.

"Goddess, I seek the sword that the goddess Bhawani gave to my ancestor."

"Are you worthy of it? If so, eat this."

As she spoke she put into his hand a plate that seemed to be filled with human flesh. The Rana might well have fled in horror, but fear and Hamir's heart had never met. He took the plate and boldly ate whatever it contained. When he returned it empty, the earth goddess gave him the sword and fastened it round him as one worthy to wear it. With it buckled to his side, the Rana walked back to the door of the cave. This he had sealed once again, and since that day no mortal has ever penetrated its dark recesses.

Ala ud din never tried to recover Chitor; for shortly afterwards he was poisoned by a favourite eunuch, thus expiating a life spent in wickedness and crime. When Mahomed

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Tughlak made himself master of the Delhi throne, he marched against Chitor; but the sword of Bhawani foiled all his efforts. Defeated in the field and held to ransom by the Rana; he thereafter turned his eyes elsewhere, and Mewar became the greatest Hindu State in northern India. No doubt evil days were yet to come during the reigns of the Moghul emperors; but Afghan and Moghul dynasties have alike passed away, whereas the descendants of Rana Hamir are still lords of Mewar. They still wield the sword of Bhawani, and their flag still flies over the warworn ramparts of Chitor.

IV

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

Two hundred and fifty years had passed since Rana Hamir Sing had regained Chitor, and the queenly city had known many changes of fortune. Its chief, the Rana Sanga, had fought against the Moghul emperor, Babar, and had been defeated. It had been stormed and sacked by Bahadur Shah, the king of ¹⁴ Gujarat, and his Portuguese allies. It had again been sacked by the great Akbar, and its Rana Udaising had been driven into the forests. There he fell ill and when dying had declared his younger son, Jagmal, to be his heir and successor, passing over the claims of his eldest son, Partapsing.

The neglect of Partapsing's rights gave great offence to his uncle, the chief of Sonigarra, and to several others among the powerful vassals of Chitor. Although they affected to humour the dying Rana's wishes, they took steps after his death to prevent

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

them from being carried out. On the day of the installation of the new Rana, Jagmal rose to take his seat under the golden disk of the sun, from which, as the legend ran, the royal house was descended. Just then the two greatest vassals of the State took each one an arm, saying:

"You are in error, my lord, that seat is not for you but for your brother Partapsing."

As they spoke, they forced him down upon a cushion close to the throne and brought Partapsing forward. That prince was booted and spurred, for he had meant to ride off immediately after Jagmal's coronation; for he knew that there would be no safety for him in Mewar, once his younger brother had been crowned. From being a landless fugitive, Partapsing suddenly found himself the first Hindu prince in India. Round his waist was girt the sword of Bhawani. The chief vassal of Mewar three times bowed low before him and led the cry that acclaimed him Rana.

The young Rajput took his new honours calmly. Once the coronation ceremonies were over, he reminded his nobles that it was the time of the spring hunt.

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

"To horse," he cried, "and slay a boar to Gauri¹ and take the omen for the coming year."²

Instantly all mounted their horses, donned green scarves in honour of the spring, rode down and speared a number of wild boar. From their size and fierceness, the sooth-sayers foretold a fortunate reign for Mewar.

The times needed a great prince, for on the throne of Delhi sat Akbar, the ablest of the long line of Moghul emperors. By his courtesy, his wisdom and courage, and above all by his marriages with the great ruling Rajput houses, he drew to his banner the best blood of that splendid race, and at the head of his armies fought the princes of Marwar, Ambar, Bikanir and Boondi. The Rana Partapsing alone refused to ally his house with the Moghuls, and by his side stood the knights of Mewar, who one and all agreed that the son of Bappa Rawal³ should never bow his head to mortal man. Indeed, from other parts of India came many Rajput lords to break by the side of Partapsing a

¹ Gauri is another name for Parwati, the queen of Shiva
² Bappa Rawal was the founder of the house of Mewar

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

spear against the hated “Toork.” But Chitor lay desolate and in the power of the Moghuls; and the court bards compared the lost city to a widow bereft of her lord, and therefore despoiled of her chief ornament. Partapsing, in order to show his sorrow for its loss, forbade to himself and his followers every sign of luxury or pomp, until Chitor was won back again. Gold and silver dishes were banished from the Rana’s table, and leaf plates took their place. The prince and his nobles must sleep on straw and their beards were never to be cut. The drums that hitherto had sounded in the van of the army must now follow in its rear.

Thinking to make firmer his seat on the throne, Partapsing sent for his brother, Sakta, who had been lost to Mewar, when only five years old. The tale runs that his armourer brought Rana Udaising, the father of both Partapsing and Sakta, a newly-fashioned dagger, that he might try its edge. The armourer began to test it by cutting some cotton cloth. Sakta asked whether it was not meant for cutting flesh and bone. As he spoke, he took the weapon from the

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

aimourer and began to cut his own hand with it. The blood gushed from the wound, but the little boy showed no fear, and seemingly felt no pain. Udaising then remembered that the court astrologer had at Sakta's birth foretold that he would grow up to be the bane of Mewar; and thinking that the child's strange courage bore out the prophecy, ordered him to be taken away and at once put to death. It so happened that one of the greatest lords in Mewar, the Chondawat vassal of Salambra, came to hear of the order. He had no sons of his own; he, therefore, begged leave to adopt Sakta. Leave was given, and Sakta was taken from Udaipur to Salambra. It so chanced that many years afterwards the Chandawat chief begat sons of his own, and regretted his adoption of Sakta. Fearing for his life, the young prince gladly accepted his brother Partapsing's invitation to join the service of Mewar.

The Rana was delighted to have his brother back, and for a time he looked upon him as a bulwark of his kingdom; but as the days passed he came to learn that there were some grounds for the fears of Udaising. Sakta,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

full of pride and courage, began to feel that he was fit for any office, however exalted, and that he and not his brother should sit on the throne of Mewar. Slighting words that fell from Sakta's lips were retold to Partapsing, and at last their smouldering anger burst into flames during a slight dispute, when hunting. Partapsing said at last:

"Let us settle our quarrel in single combat, just to prove who is the better lancer."

Sakta replied with Rajput courtesy: "By all means, but do you strike the first blow." Partapsing excused himself. Sakta did the same. At last they agreed to charge against each other simultaneously. As the brothers rode back to a distance in opposite directions, their *pmohit*, or family priest, rushed between them and implored them to stop. Unhappily the honour of the two high-spirited princes was too deeply involved for either to obey. In despair the priest drew his dagger and plunged it into his heart, falling dead between the two riders. There could be no question of continuing the duel, when the priest, whom both revered, lay drenched in his own blood.

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

between them. Partapsing recovered himself, waved his hand and ordered Sakta to leave Mewar for ever. Sakta did so, and, going to Agra with such followers, as he could gather round him, he offered his sword to the Emperor Akbar.

Since Partapsing could not enjoy the revenues of his State where occupied by the Moghuls, he was resolved that there should be no revenues to enjoy. He turned his country into a desert and even hanged a goatherd whom he found grazing his goats on the banks of the Banas river. Akbar for several years paid little heed to the raids of Partapsing, but one day Raja Mansing of Ambar brought to him a tale that compelled the emperor to take action.

Raja Mansing of Ambar, who had given his sister to Akbar in marriage, invited himself, after a victorious campaign in the Deccan, to a meeting with the Rana Partapsing. The latter prepared a feast for his visitor on the banks of the lake near Udaipur, but excused his own presence on the ground of a severe headache. Partapsing's son, in his place, attended on Raja Mansing and pressed him



RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

the Rana and the insult to himself, Akbar mobilized a large, well-equipped force, nominally led by his son Selim, a child of seven, but really by Mahabat Khan the most skilled general of the day. With Mahabat Khan were Sakti, the Rana's brother, and Mansing of Ambar, both consumed with a burning thirst for revenge. The Rana could but muster 22,000 Rajputs, but he had on his side the forest Bhils. They were useless in open warfare, but in the wild country, where Partapsing still ruled, they could warn their chief of the foes' movements and shoot at them arrows and roll down on them boulders and tree trunks from the overhanging cliffs. Gradually the Moghul army forced the Rana into an area of some eighty square miles round Udaipur. In one corner was the chief's last refuge, and with it ran a rugged path from the wide clearing known as Haldighat. If the Rana was to keep the Moghuls from the last hiding place left him, he must await them in Haldighat plain. There in July, 1576, the two armies met.

Partapsing did all and more than all that a Rana of Mewar at the head of his feudal

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

warriors could do. He tried to force his way to the elephant on which rode prince Selim and reached so close to it that he was able by a lance cast to kill its mahout; but the uncontrolled elephant saved the prince by turning round and rushing out of the battle. Partap-sing then sought in vain Mansing of Ambar; but his reckless courage would have ended in his death, had not one of his feudatories, the Jhala chief, saved his lord's life at the cost of his own. Plucking the standard from its bearer's hands, he caused it to be borne above his own head and so drew the press of battle towards himself and away from the Rana. After a most gallant fight he and all the Jhala nobles with him fell on the field of honour.

At last even the valour of Mewar could do no more. When fourteen thousand Sisodia Rajputs¹ lay with their faces towards the foe on Haldighat plain, the Rana ordered the remaining eight thousand to save themselves by flight. He himself rode off unattended on his gallant but wounded horse, Chetak. The noble animal shook off pursuit by springing across a mountain stream. After a little time

¹ Sisodia was the tribal name of the Rajputs of Mewar

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

the fugitive Rana heard behind him the sound of galloping horse hooves. Then he heard the well known voice of his brother, Sakta, call out:

“ O rider of the blue horse,¹ tell me how a man feels when riding for his life? ”

Partapsing checked the wounded Chetak, who indeed could do no more. It fell dead at its master's feet as he dismounted. He was resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, but Prince Sakta reassured him:

“ I have not come to take your life, but to save it. When I saw you fleeing unattended and pursued by two Moghul nobles, my love for you returned. I slew your pursuers and I have brought you my horse.”

He, too, dismounted and the brothers embraced. Sakta handed over his horse and returned to the Moghul camp on the steed of one of the nobles whom he had slain. In the camp he told a lying tale that the Rana had killed both the Moghuls and indeed Sakta's own horse and then escaped. He himself had been forced to mount the steed of one of the two dead men. The story was

¹ Indians usually call roan horses blue (ml)

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

very rightly disbelieved. At last Prince Selim, with a child's curiosity, sent for Sakta and ordered him to tell the truth. If he did so he would have a free pardon. Sakta knew that he was in mortal danger and confessed what he had done.

"The burden of a kingdom is on my brother's shoulders. I could not witness his danger without defending him."

The prince kept his promise, but dismissed Sakta from the emperor's service. Sakta retaliated by escalading the fort of Bhainsror and then offering his sword to Partapsing. The Rana greeted him joyfully, and gave him the newly-taken fort to be a fief to him and his heirs after him for ever.

Although the Moghuls had won the stricken field of Haldighat, they had not ended the war. In mountain gorges, by rushing torrents, amid the depths of the Aravali forests, the Rana still guarded his freedom, and from time to time would sally forth and cut in pieces unwary detachments. When the rains came and the Moghul armies could no longer keep the field, Partapsing would regain much of his lost land. Above all, his faithful Bhils

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

stood by him through good report and evil. Once they saved the royal children by packing them in baskets filled with earth and hiding them in the tin mines, where they worked. Still, year by year the Rana's lot grew worse. His men died of starvation or disease or left him. His queen sickened through want of food. His children's cradles had to be hung up on trees to save them from tigers and wolves. At last a day came when a wild cat sprang and tore a piece of bread out of his little daughter's hand. As the poor child had had no food all day, she cried so piteously that the proud soul of the Rana at last gave way. He wrote a letter to the emperor offering to submit and asking for terms of peace.

Akbar was overjoyed, for he wished, above everything, to end a war that brought him neither glory nor plunder and that fretted the restless spirit of the Rajputs who served him. He showed the letter to Pirthiraj, a son of the chief of Bikanir and the greatest poet of his time. Impetuously the prince denounced the Rana's letter as a base forgery. At the same time he wrote and sent to Partapsing a poem burning with Rajput feeling.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

“ The hopes of the Hindu rest on the Hindu and yet the Rana forsakes them. . . .

“ Akbar cannot live for ever; then will our race come to Partap, that the seed of the Rajput may again be sown in our desolate land. To him all men look to guard it, that it may once again shine forth pure and splendid.”

On reading the poem the Rana was filled with shame at his submission, and resolved never to yield. It was, however, useless to linger on in Mewar. He would leave to the Moghuls his ruined land, and carve for himself a new kingdom on the banks of the Indus. Calling to him his faithful vassals, he set out northwards, but when he had reached the edge of the Sind desert, a breathless messenger overtook him and handed him a letter. The Rana read it and ordered his band to retrace their steps. The hereditary prime minister of the Rana’s house, Bhama Sah, had submitted to the Moghuls, but, shocked beyond measure at the Rana’s resolve to abandon Mewar, he offered the accumulated wealth of his family to the fugitive prince. The sum was so vast that it would keep an army of

RANA PARTAPSING OF MEWAR

twenty-five thousand men for twelve years. The rumour flew through Rajasthan that the great Rana not only needed an army but could also feed and arm it. Night and day from all parts of northern India there came spurring to join his banner knights from all branches of the Rajput race, until in the sunshine of a spring morning there flashed in the presence of Partapsing forty thousand naked blades, all as bright and unstained as the honour of Mewar.

Like a tidal wave this great array swept through the conquered lands. Shahbaz, the commander of the Moghul army of occupation, was surprised, and with his men cut to pieces.

The panic-stricken garrisons of the fortresses surrendered without a blow, and Mewar was once again free from border to border. Nor did Akbar aught to check the Rana's progress.

His own romantic mind was filled with admiration for Partapsing's glorious deeds, while the tragic end of his two sons and the turbulence of his heir, prince Selim, drew his thoughts elsewhere.

Partapsing did not live long to enjoy his last great triumph. His frame, worn out with

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

sorrow and hardship, gave way; and the great prince whose life had been spent in guarding his birthright, lay stretched on a pallet in Udaipur, surrounded by the nobles who had shared his toils and his glory. He lingered so long that one of them asked him:

"What afflicts the soul of the Rana that it will not depart in peace?"

"It lingers," murmured the dying king, "because it needs a pledge that the land of Mewar shall never be abandoned to the Turk."

One and all the high-spirited nobles at the bedside of the king vowed "by the throne of Bappa Rawal," that never would Mewar lose her freedom. Reassured by the pledged word of his most trusted comrades, the dying Rana's soul had peace, and left the weary body to join the souls of Bappa Rawal and Hamir Rana in the mansions of the sungod.

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

WHEN Amrasing succeeded his father Partapsing, he stood half a head taller than any man in Mewar. He was as brave as a lion and of prodigious strength; but he had spent his infancy and boyhood in the forests of the Aravali mountains, and he had no wish to go again on his travels. He knew, too, how desolate was his poor kingdom and how much it had need of peace; and that he gave it. Akbar was ageing and was weary of life, and gave up all thought of conquering Mewar. Wisely Amrasing resisted all temptation to extend his borders, and spent the first few years of his reign in restoring prosperity to his kingdom. Fifty years of warfare had turned a fertile land into a vast desert. He rebuilt Udaipur, that he declared his new capital, and made for himself a palace, which he filled with beautiful furniture and ornaments and costly hangings imported from Europe. Then

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

in 1605 the great Akbar died and his son, Prince Selim, followed him on the Delhi throne, as the emperor Jahangir.

When four more years had passed and Jahangir felt safe on his throne, he resolved to succeed where Akbar had failed, and to reduce Mewar to a province of the empire. He sent ahead an imperial rescript, directing the Rana to attend his court and pay him homage. At the same time he gathered a large army and marched into Mewar. Amrasing was in despair. All his schemes for bringing his country back to its former happy state would come to naught, if he began again the endless war. Once more would its cities be made desolate, its forests burnt and its fields lie fallow. For a time he wavered; he could not bring himself to sign away his freedom, yet he longed for his people's welfare. As he hesitated the greatest chiefs in Mewar craved an audience. They had sworn to the dying Partapsing that they would never bow the head to the Moghul, and they called on their young Rana to lead them forth to the field of honour.

Amrasing tried to put before them the other side of the case, but where they thought their

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

honour involved, it was idle to reason with the Sisodia chieftains. Their leader was the lord of Salumbra, the descendant of Chondasing, a former heir to the throne, who resigned his claim to the throne to become the first noble in the land. Chondasing's descendants were known as Chondawats and they had, and guarded jealously, the right to lead the vanguard of the Rana's army into battle. The chief of Salumbra waited scornfully until Amrasing had said his say. Then picking up a brass weight that held down the carpet, he flung it with terrific force at a splendid mirror that hung above the Rana's head. As the glass splintered and fell, the Chondawat lord seized his sovereign and pulled him off his throne.

“To horse, chiefs,” he cried, “and save from infamy the son of Partap!”

Furious at the bold act, the Rana called the Chondawat lord a traitor. Firm in his belief that he was acting rightly, the Chondawat paid no heed to his master's angry words and with the help of the other feudal lords, he forced Amrasing into the saddle. Then seizing the horse's bridle he made it

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

gallop into the open country. In impotent rage the Rana burst into tears, but none heeded him. A few furlongs further on the Rana, whose courage was as high as any of the nobles who rode with him, recovered his self-control, he stroked his moustache and then bowed courteously to all, craving pardon for his ill temper. He bowed specially low to the Chondawat chief, whom he had insulted, and said :

“ Lead on, nor shall you ever have cause to regret your late sovereign.”

The superb courtesy of the sovereign, added to the challenge of the barbarian, roused the Sisodia knights to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. Meeting the imperial army at Daver, the very spot where Partapsing had cut in pieces the army of Shahbaz Khan, they fell upon it with the utmost fury. After a long and bloody fight the columns of Jahangir were overthrown and destroyed. The following year Amrasing all but exterminated a second army in the pass of Rampur. Jahangir then resolved to try other weapons than the swords of his Moghuls. In the previous reign Sagra, a brother of Partapsing, left on some

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

quarrel the Rana's service and offered his sword to Akbar. He was received with honour and made commander of two hundred. Jahangir proclaimed Sagra, Rana of Mewar. With a large Moghul escort, Sagra went to reign among the ruins of Chitor. For seven years he kept there a phantom state, but none of the Sisodia lords would attend his court, and the spirits of his glorious forbears haunted him day and night. Lastly the god Shiva, in his most awful guise, appeared to him and declared to him his displeasure. Unable to brave the terrors of another world, the recreant sent for Rana Amrasing and handing over to him Chitor, fled in terror to the fort of Kandhar. Even there the spirits of Bappa Rawal and Hamirsing never ceased to haunt him, and he fled again to Agra and the court of Jahangir. There the emperor upbraided him as a double-dyed renegade. This was more than the troubled mind of Sagra could bear. Drawing his dagger, he drove it into his own heart and fell dead at Jahangir's feet.

“ It was an end worthy of such a traitor,” muttered the Moghul, and ordered the body to be carried outside the palace.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Among the brilliant feats of arms that shed lustre on the annals of Mewar, there is none that exceeds the tale of the storm of Untala. Sakta, the brother of Partapsing, had, on his death, left seventeen valiant sons, but all that he left to support them was the fief of Bhainsror. To rid himself of his sixteen brothers, Bhanji, the eldest, bade them go with the body of their father, Sakta, to the burning ground. In their absence, Bhanji manned the walls of the fortress with men devoted to his cause. When they had performed their duty as mourners, the sixteen brothers went back to Bhainsror, only to find the gates shut against them. From the walls Bhanji called to them to be gone, as in Bhainsror there was only enough to feed one mouth and not seventeen. They could do nothing in face of their elder's treachery. They asked for, and he gave them, their horses and their arms, and they set out in desperate plight for Idar, where the ruler greeted them kindly and gave them lands for their maintenance. There they took the name of Saktawats, or the sons of Sakta.

When the ceaseless war against the Moghuls began to eat up the army of Rana Amrasing

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

of Mewar, he sent for his sixteen cousins and asked them to fight with him against the Turk. No request could have been more pleasing to the daredevil sons of Sakta, and they rode at full speed to Mewar from Idar. Greatly pleased was the Rana at their swift coming, and still more at their modest bearing. One day two of the Saktawats, Balo and his brother Jodha, worked far into the night, gathering brushwood and logs for the royal campfire. The Rana in return gave to Balo the right to lead into battle the vanguard of Mewar. For the moment the king had forgotten that for many generations this had been the right of the Chondawat, the lord of Salumbra; but the question soon became one of fearful import.

Some weeks later the Rana gave orders to storm the frontier fortress of Untala, that covered the road to Chitor. The Chondawat chieftain, feeling sure that the next day he would lead the morrow's forlorn hope, had laid himself early to rest; but sleep came not. Up and down in front of his tent strode the bard of the Chondawats, crying out at the top of his voice the battle call of the clan:

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

"The portal of the ten thousand! The portal of the ten thousand!"

At last the lord of Salumbra could stand it no longer, and forgetting the respect due to the bard, bade him hold his peace, and not behave like a madman.

"I am not mad," retorted the bard. "But this is perhaps the last day that you will hear me call out your battle cry. From to-morrow the honour of leading the vanguard will belong to the Saktawats."

"What in God's name do you mean?" asked the chieftain.

"Go and see the Rana; he will tell you," replied the bard, and then explained that he had heard that the Rana had given the right to lead the Mewar vanguard to the Saktawats.

The Chondawat lord, beside himself with rage, forced his way into the Rana's presence, where he found with the king Balo and other Saktawats.

Before the Rana could demand the meaning of this unasked intrusion, the Chondawat exclaimed:

"What does this insult mean, my lord Rana?

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

Why have you taken from us the honour of leading your vanguard against the Turk?"

"Pooh!" interrupted Balo, "your claims are stale. We have recently deserved well of the Rana, and he has thus rewarded us."

In an instant the Rajputs' swords leapt from their scabbards and the rival clansmen would have fought until not one was left living. Just in time the Rana intervened:

"Your foe is the Turk and not each other. The right to lead my vanguard shall be the clan's who to-morrow are first inside Untala."

To the high-spirited young nobles such a contest was irresistible. The Rana, by his judgment, swept away all claims, new and old alike, and valour alone was to decide the issue. Without retiring to rest the Saktawats set forth at once for Untala with their war elephant, hoping to take the fort by surprise or if not to batter in the main gate. The surprise failed, for the Moghuls speedily manned the walls. The war elephant was brought up to the gate, but it had sharp spikes and these so pierced the great beast's forehead that it would not use its full weight, but turned tail and could not be brought to the charge again.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Unhappily, the Saktawats had, in their haste, forgotten to bring scaling ladders. In the meantime they heard from the other side of Untala the warcry of the Chondawats.

“ The portal of the ten thousand! The portal of the ten thousand! ”

There was thus no time to be lost. If only the body of a camel or a cow could be tied across the elephant’s forehead, it would not feel the spikes and would use its weight and strength to push open the doors of the gateway. But neither camel nor cow was to be seen. Then Balo, on whom the Rana had bestowed the honour to lead the Saktawats, bade his mahout on pain of death to tie him to the elephant’s forehead. His back was turned to the iron spikes, so that at the last moment he might not flinch. The elephant no longer feared to charge the gates and rushed at them at full speed. The iron spikes entered the body of Balo, but the gates bent inwards and crashed to the ground and the Saktawats and their men at arms sprang into Untala.

Yet in spite of Balo’s courage, it was the Chondawats who won the glorious contest. With the experience of countless forlorn hopes,

RANA AMRASING OF MEWAR

they had brought scaling ladders with them. The lord of Salumbra raced up the first ladder put against the walls. Shot through the heart he fell back to the ground. His second in command, the chief of Devgarh, lifted the dead noble's body and tied it with his shawl over his own back. Carrying the dead leader, he, too, raced up the ladder and sprang from the battlements into the fortress. Behind him poured the rest of his clan. Reckless of death and wounds, they raised the cry:

“ The vanguard to the Chondawats! We are first inside Untala! The vanguard to the Chondawats! ” At that moment the Sak-tawats' elephant broke down the main doors, but it was too late. The chief of the Chondawats and his men were already within the walls. In a few minutes Untala had fallen, and the Rana rode thither as fast as his horse could carry him. He reached it in time to greet Balo before he died, for, incredible as it may seem, he had, although mortally wounded, not died at once. Balo prayed for his clan the honour for which he was dying; but heart-broken although the Rana was, he could not grant the prayer. The dead lord of Salumbra

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

had been first inside the walls of Untala and for ever afterwards the Chondawat clan led into battle the vanguard of Mewar

When the rival clans had stormed their way into the fortress, they found two of the Moghul leaders engaged as they had been all night, in a game of chess. Ignorant of the fall of Untala, they played on with their heads bent over the chessboard. When the Rajputs rushed in they did not beg for mercy; they merely asked as a favour that they might be allowed to finish their game, which had reached an interesting stage. With grave courtesy the rival clans granted the request, but more they would not give. They could not forget that Balo, the Saktawat leader, had been killed by the spikes of the Moghul gateway, and that the Chondawat lord of Salumbra had been shot as he strove to scale the wall. When the word checkmate had been said, they took the Moghuls to another room and slew them without mercy

In seventeen fights against the Moghuls, the Rana of Mewar was victorious; then he looked round him and saw that he had no more troops. The treasure that Bhama Sah had

term with the emperor. After all, Partapsing had all but done so, and had but withdrawn his letter on receiving the protest of Pirthitaj of Bikanir. So the fatal letter of submission was sent. The emperor was overjoyed, for he had staked his honour on conquering the unconquerable land, and now at last it was his. The terms that he offered were such as no Moghul emperor had offered to any other Hindu chief; yet no generosity could soothe the injured pride of the proudest of mankind. Once Amrsing had carried out the strict terms of the treaty, that changed him from the first Hindu ruler to a vassal of Delhi, he would

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

no longer hold the office of Rana. He resigned his throne to his son, Karansing, and withdrew from his capital to the Nauchauki palace on a low hill outside Udaipur. For five years he lived immured within the walls of its spacious garden, and then was carried out that his body might be burnt and its ashes laid to rest with those of his forbears, who had ruled in Mewar.

VI

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

THE servitude of Mewar lasted barely fifty years; then once again awoke the restless spirit of the Sisodias. When Rana Rajsing, the grandson of Amrasing, who resigned his throne rather than hold it as a fief of Delhi, became king, he celebrated the event by plundering a town within the Moghul borders. This was an old Rajput custom, and really was a trifling matter, for the Rana did not stoop to rob merchants or peasants. Nevertheless it was a deadly insult to the empire. Shah Jahan, who had succeeded Jahangir and was adopted brother of Rajsing's father, treated the matter as of no account. He had no wish to provoke another war in Mewar, and merely said: "It is only a folly of my nephew."

Some years later Rajsing insulted the Moghul emperor in a way that no ruler could forgive. Aurangzib had succeeded Shah Jahan, and looked about for a Rajput beauty to be his

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

wife. The fairest highborn lady of the day was the Rathor princess of Rupnagar. The emperor sent a letter to her father, asking for her hand in marriage; and sure that his proposal would be accepted, he sent with the letter two thousand Moghul cavalry to escort the lovely princess to Delhi; but the beautiful maiden had other views. She had no wish to be immured in the imperial zenana, or share Aurangzib's favours with a score of other princesses. There was only one prince worthy of such loveliness as hers, and he was the Rana of Mewar. While seeming to approve the emperor's offer of marriage, which her father had eagerly accepted, she called to her aid the family priest. In his presence she wrote a letter to Rana Rajsing, whom she had never seen, and said:

“Ride with this letter to Udaipur for life and death; if you do, I may yet escape this hateful marriage.”

The priest willingly accepted the task imposed by the beautiful princess, and rode with all speed to Udaipur. There he handed to the Rana himself the letter. The Rana opened and read these words.

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

“Is the swan to be the mate of a stork? Shall a Rajputni of the purest blood be the wife of a monkey-faced barbarian? If the Lord of Mewar will not save me, I shall die rather than yield to the outcaste’s embraces!”

The chivalrous Sisodia prince called to him his chief nobles and to them read the princess’ letter.

“Shall we rescue the princess or shall we sit idly at home while she either kills herself or weds the hated Turk?”

The Sisodia lords, whose swordblades had long fretted in their scabbards, gave with one voice the answer that the Rana hoped for; and five thousand men rode off with the Rana to Rupnagar. They met the imperial guards just outside the town as they were about to leave it in stately procession with the unwilling bride. Surprised and outnumbered, the Moghuls were cut down to a man; the Rana lifted to his saddle the beautiful maiden and rode back with her in triumph to Udaipur.

Even Shah Jahan could not have ignored such an insult, and Aurangzib, lashed to savage fury by the loss of his bride and the insolence of his vassal, invaded Mewar.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

It was in a far better state than when Amrasing had perforce craved terms of Jahangir. During fifty years of peace its fields had been cultivated, its population had doubled and the treasure chests of the army were once more full. Now that the red standard of Mewar was again raised in defiance of the Moghul, fifty thousand warriors from all the clans of Rajasthan gathered to fight for the Rana and to guard his queen.

Aurangzib recalled his troops from Kabul, Bengal and the Deccan, and forming three great armies, put at their head his three sons, Akbar, Azam and Muazzam. The Rana could not meet in the open this gigantic force, so, following the ancient custom of the lords of Mewar, he left Chitor and other strongholds to be stormed by the Moghuls, while he gathered all his men in the Aravali mountains. He, too, created three armies, far smaller, it is true, than those of the Moghul, but fired by a more splendid spirit. They were led by the Rana in person, and by his two sons Prince Jaising and Prince Bhim. Aurangzib stayed with a large escort in the open country round Ajmir and sent his son, Akbar, to occupy with

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

fifty thousand men Udaipur. The prince advanced into the plain, where the capital stood, and noticed that no peasants tilled the soil. He asked why, and was reassured by his captains that they had fled, fearing the excesses of the soldiery. He entered the capital, but there was not a burgher in the streets:

“The Kafirs have run away, fearing conversion to Islam,” his captains told the prince. The army, meeting with no opposition, dispersed through the town and rested after their weary march.

“They came to steal and yet they fell asleep,” wrote the Rajput bard. Suddenly the Rana’s eldest son swept through Udaipur, cutting down the Moghul footsoldiers in thousands. Prince Akbar strove to rally his men and to retreat by the road along which he had come; but the Rana, with a picked body of Sisodia horse, made retreat that way impossible. Akbar tried to cut his way into Marwar, but in the meantime the forest tribes had built barriers across the roads, and by flights of arrows and by stones rolled down from the mountains completely checked the Moghul army. The prince, in despair, went

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

back to Udaipur, and there, with the remnants of his force, nearly died of hunger. At last he sued for peace, promising to end the war and to obtain from the emperor the freedom of Mewar. The Rana trusted the prince's promises and sent men to guide what was left of the shattered army back to Chitor.

In earlier wars the Rana of Mewar had to fight not only the Moghul emperor, but his allies, the Rathors of Marwar, or Jodhpur. In the war that now flamed up the Rathors to a man were on the side of the Rana, and this is how it came about. Some years before, Jaswantsing, the ruler of Marwar, had died at Kabul. His chief Rani, a princess of Mewar, had at first wished to burn herself with her husband's body, but the Rahtor lords would not let her, for she was with child, and a young prince was needed for Marwar. Two months later a son, Ajitsing, was born to her. The news reached the ears of Aurangzib, who at once thought to seize the baby prince and convert him to Islam. The emperor's guards first tried to stop the Rani and her son at Attock; but the Rajputs skilfully crossed the Indus by a ford unknown

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

to the Moghuls. When the Rani and her son reached Delhi, they hoped to find shelter there with their Sisodia and Rathor kinsmen; but Aurangzib ordered them to camp outside the walls. They did so, and were at once hemmed in by Moghul guardsmen. The chief Rathor lord with the queen was Durgadas of Gangani, and for him the emperor sent. With him went the other leading nobles of Marwar to the hall of audience. Aurangzib greeted them with all his guileful charm and said:

“ Rathor princes and lords, would you be great in your own lands? If so, hand over the Rani and her son and I shall divide between you the crown lands of Marwar.”

“ Our country is with our sinews,” was the bold reply, “ and we can defend both it and our lord.”

The Rathors stormed out of the hall of audience, and round their camp more Moghul soldiers were posted. There was no escape possible save by a trick, and that they played. They bade the Rani exchange her rich dress for that of a well-to-do peasant. Prince Ajitsing, her baby, was hidden in a basket,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

said to be full of sweetmeats, and mother and son were sent with a small escort to Jodhpur. In her place the Rathors put a young slave woman and her son in the Rani's and the prince's clothes, so that Aurangzib might secure them and not pursue the others

When the Rani and the real prince had only left the camp two days and could not, therefore, be very far away, the emperor demanded that Rani and prince be handed over to him. The Rathors refused and prepared for battle, that, as they knew, awaited them. They made offerings to the gods, took a double dose of opium and mounted their steeds.

“Let us swim,” they cried, “in the ocean of battle!”

They killed all the ladies of the dead Jaswantsing so that whatever befell these should not be dishonoured by the barbarian. Drunk with the joy of battle and roused to the highest pitch of fury, they charged the Moghuls. There was method in their madness. They fought to gain time for the fleeing Rani and to make the emperor think that she must really be in their midst. When they had fought long enough for honour, Durgadas

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

signalled to his men and with supreme skill and valour, they cut their way through the Moghul circle. Galloping as fast as their steeds could carry them, they overtook the Rani and Ajitsing along the Jodhpur road. The false queen and the false prince fell, as they were meant to, into the emperor's hands, but in a few days the manners and appearance of the slave woman betrayed her secret. By that time it was too late to overtake the real Rani and her son; so Aurangzib feigned to believe that the slave woman and her son were the real widow and heir of Jaswantsing. He converted the boy to Islam and then invaded Jodhpur to place the little Musulman prince on the throne.

The real Rani and her son fled to her ancient home in Mewar, where her brother, the Rana, and his captured bride, the former princess of Rupnager, welcomed them. The son they kept, but the Rani returned to Marwar, where, taking a man's arms and armour, she led her troops into battle. In many fights she was successful, but even the united strength of Marwar and Mewar could not for ever repel the inexhaustible armies of the Moghuls. Then

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

the Rana and Durgadas, the Rathor lord of Gangani, conceived a daring plan. Prince Akbar had promised them to end the war. He was deeply grateful to the Rana for letting him and his men escape from Udaipur. If they raised him to the throne of Delhi, he would give Mewar back its freedom and rid them of the fanatic Aurangzib. They sent messages to Akbar, who had no love for his father, and tempted him with the peacock throne of Delhi. When the prince demurred, they asked him:

“Did not Aurangzib himself overthrow and imprison a kindly father? Does he deserve better treatment than he himself gave to Shah Jahan?”

Akbar was persuaded, and the armies of Mewar and Marwar proclaimed him emperor of Hindustan. Seventy thousand strong they marched on Delhi. Aurangzib was in deadly peril, for he was at Ajmir with only a thousand men, but his wit and courage saved him. He sent a spy to drop a letter near Durgadas' tent. It was written by Aurangzib, and it conveyed to Akbar thanks for so skilfully bringing the Rajputs into the open plain, where

RANA RAJSING OF MEWAR

his greater numbers would overwhelm them. As credulous as they were generous, the Rajputs fell into the simple trap, and scattered in all directions. With much trouble Akbar persuaded Durgadas that the letter was a mere ruse, but it was then too late. Two great armies, led by two other sons of the emperor, had come to his help, and he was invincible. The Rana of Mewar offered to the prince the shelter of the Aravali hills, but he refused, and fled southwards to the Maratha court and afterwards to Persia.

Aurangzib, hampered as he was by the Deccan war, was unable to conquer Mewar and Marwar; so to gratify his spite, he re-introduced the jazya, or poll tax, on all Hindus. It had been prescribed by the prophet Mahomed, but the great Akbar a hundred years before had abolished it. The revival of this hated tax turned against Delhi the heart of every Hindu; and the wretched emperor, battling in vain in Rajputana, Bengal and the Deccan, grew weaker and weaker. Mewar regained and kept its freedom. Marwar, led by Ajitsing, the son of Jaswantsing, whom the Rana of Mewar had sheltered, drove the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

invaders from the land, although, according to the Rajput chronicler, they were as numerous as the raindrops of heaven. Without Rajput allies the emperor was no match for the Marathas. At last in March, 1707, the aged Aurangzib, after a long life distinguished by high talents, bigotry and wickedness died a broken man in Ahmadnagar. Mewar was never again to lose its freedom. That is why men in Rupnagar still boast that it was their lovely princess who saved from the yoke of the Moghuls the Ranas of Mewar.

VII

JAY SHIKHAR

Now that I have sketched the great deeds of the cavaliers of Rajasthan, I shall change the scene of my tales; and I shall beg my readers to come with me to Gujarat and Kathiawar, where feats of no less daring than those of Mewar adorned the great Rajput clans. The first of my Gujarat cavaliers will be the renowned Jay Shikhar, the father of the great prince, who founded Anhilwada and the ancestor of the Rajput house that ruled it for over five hundred years.

In the year A.D. 696 Bhuwad Raja was king of Kalyani, in the Deccan plain. His capital was filled with the spoils of conquered foes, and with war horses, chariots and elephants. Ever by his side stood on duty one or other of his sixteen famous knights, who at the head of the royal armies had conquered all the kingdoms of the earth, with but one exception, the kingdom of Gujarat. Its extent was small,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

compared with that of Kalyani, but its freedom was guarded by valiant warriors, and its king was the incomparable Jay Shikhar. His queen was the beautiful Rupsundari and his capital was Panchasur, which men now call Radhanpur.

Many times the knights of Bhuvad Raja had gone forth to conquer the kingdom of Gujarat, but always the skill of Jay Shikhar had baffled them. At last they abandoned the vain task and, plundering some defenceless villages on the way to Kalyani, falsely informed Bhuvad Raja that Jay Shikhar had acknowledged as his overlord the king of Kalyani and that the spoil of the villagers was the tribute offered to his suzerain by the new vassal.

The king of Kalyani was happy at last; for he had conquered the whole known universe. One day as he sat in a garden as beautiful as the paradise of Shiva and was listening, surrounded by his courtiers, to a lay written in his honour by his court poet, Kam Raj, a foreigner, claiming to be a bard, craved an audience. He was admitted and recited a poem in glorification of his host. Bhuvad Raja was delighted and, giving the minstrel a

JAY SHIKHAR

jewelled robe, asked him his name and his homeland. The bard gave his name as Shankar and his home as Panchasur; then, carried away by the splendour of the scene, he broke into praise of his beloved Gujarat:

“ I have come,” he sang, “ from Panchasur, in Gujarat, the residence of Saraswati, the goddess of learning—a city so beautiful that no one would exchange it for paradise. The king is the incomparable Chavda prince, whom poets have rightly hailed as Jay Shikhar, or the very spire of victory! ”

King Bhuwad was so nettled at this praise of Gujarat, that he stroked his moustache defiantly; and his court minstrel, Kam Raj, challenged Shankar to contend with him in verse. Against the foreign poet’s art all Kam Raj’s skill availed him nothing, and Shankar, after defeating his rival in verse, left the royal garden in triumph and began his journey home.

King Bhuwad, ‘out of temper’ at the scene that he had witnessed, summoned his sixteen knights and at last forced them to admit that they had never reduced Jay Shikhar to obedience. He ordered an army to assemble,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

and put at its head his knights, and bade them redeem their good name by taking Panchasur without delay.

In the meantime the minstrel, Shankar, had returned to his master's capital and informed him what had occurred. Like a true Rajput, the Chavda king rejoiced at the prospect of a battle, and collected a force, which, although far inferior in numbers to that of Kalyani, was brave and well equipped.

Raja Bhuwad sent ahead a vanguard under one of his knights, Mir by name. They camped at a spot six miles from Panchasur; and although in those golden days it was the custom of the Rajput chiefs to spare the country people and fight other Rajputs only, yet Mir's soldiers murdered, plundered and ravished as they went.

Jay Shikhar protested, and compared Mir with a dog who, when struck by a stone, bit the stone and not the thrower. Mir replied by summoning Jay Shikhar to present himself as a suppliant, his mouth full of grass, at Mir's camp. To this summons Jay Shikhar made no reply, but Surpal, the brother of his beautiful queen Rupsundari, answered it as a

JAY SHIKHAR

Rajput should. With a body of clansmen he made a night attack on Mir's camp and found it wholly unprepared. The soldiers were either revelling or plundering or deep in drunken slumber. They were cut to pieces. Two of Bhuwad's knights, Chand and Dhwand, were killed. A third, Vaid by name, was so horror-struck at the slaughter that he tore off his soldier's dress and became an anchorite at Benares. The braggart Mir never halted in his flight until he reached a stronghold only a few miles from Kalyani.

King Bhuwad, who was a brave man, rallied the fugitives, and with his main army marched against Panchasur. Jay Shikhar, whose force was too small to meet King Bhuwad in the open field, shut himself up inside his citadel. The first assaults were easily repulsed, and after a siege of fifty-two days the besiegers had not progressed at all. The cowardly Mir advised his king to win over Surpal, and with Bhuwad's consent he sent to Surpal a letter in invisible writing, that became legible only if it was rubbed with saffron; but Mir's villainy was as useless as the assaults of Bhuwad's troops. Surpal replied that he was as attached

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

to Jay Shikhar as water was to milk, when they were mingled together, and that he would not desert his king even if the sovereignty of the three worlds was the price of his crime.

King Bhuwad, who had received fresh troops, resolved to reduce Panchasur by continued assaults, and both leaders encouraged their followers by reading to them passages from the great epic poem of India, the Mahabharat. Next morning the main attack began. Surpal gave further proof of his loyalty by driving back the Kalyani knight, Bhut, who was killed in the assault. Other troops, however, forced their way close to the west wall of the fort; and there, sheltered from the arrows of the defenders, soon made breaches in the stonework.

Jay Shikhar, invested on every side, was cut off from help, whereas Bhuwad could get fresh troops when he would. Jay Shikhar scorned death, but he could not bear the thought that his line would perish utterly. He sent for Surpal, and told him that the queen, Surpal's sister, was expecting a child. He ordered him, therefore, to escort her into

JAY SHIKHAR

safety from the doomed fortress. Surpal at first hotly refused, and only yielded when Jay Shikhar appealed to his love and loyalty. Rupsundari had to be adjured in the same way; but in the end Surpal led her through a secret gate out of Panchasur and, riding all night, was soon in the heart of the hill forests. There he left her that he might return to die by the side of Jay Shikhar.

In his absence Panchasur had fallen. Before the final assault Bhuwad Raja had offered terms of submission so degrading that they were rejected with scorn. The Kalyani troops forced their way through a breech and there Jay Shikhar was killed, fighting to the death. Thence they attacked the palace, but the dancing girls resisted them with such valour that the troops fell back, allowing the women to recover the body of their dead king. This they put on a stack of wood and set fire to it. Four of Jay Shikhar's queens threw themselves on his body. The surviving palace women followed their example, and in the blaze, not only they but the whole town, its townspeople and many of Raja Bhuwad's troops, were utterly consumed.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

When Surpal saw Panchasur in flames and learnt that the king was dead, he saw that his duty no longer lay there, but by the side of his sister, Rupsundari. He rode back, taking with him his own wife, Vimaldevi. At first he could not find his sister, for she had met a Bhil woman who had offered her food and shelter. There in the squalid huts of the forest tribe she stayed, and in the following spring she gave birth to a son whom she named Wanraj, or king of the woodland.

Surpal left his wife, Vimaldevi, in what he thought was a secure shelter and went to look for Rupsundari. In his absence Bhuwad's son, Prince Karan, at the head of some Kalyani soldiers, came upon the hiding-place of Vimaldevi. Overjoyed at his success and enchanted by her beauty, Prince Karan cut down her guards and bore her away. He told his captive that Surpal had been killed and offered to marry her. The proud lady, whose caste was far higher than that of Karan, refused with scorn to marry a southern barbarian. She declared herself a sati and ordered on pain of her curse that her captors should build a funeral pyre on which she might

JAY SHIKHAR

burn herself. The unhappy prince feared to disobey, and, after building the pyre as high as befitted the queenly lady's rank, stood by with his men to watch the fearless princess pass through the flames to join her husband. In the meantime Surpal had returned to the cave wherein he had left his wife. One of her guards still breathed and he told his master what had happened. Surpal gathered together such men as he could and rode like a whirlwind on Karan's track. He came on the prince and his soldiers as they watched Vimaldevi mount the pyre. Surprised and bewildered, they let themselves be butchered like sheep, and Surpal and Vimaldevi were once more united.

Surpal continued to search for Rupsundari, and found her at last with her son, Wanraj, whom the Bhils cared for with devotion. The little woodland king ran many risks from wild beasts and cruel foes, but in spite of them he grew to manhood, tall and splendid as a forest tree. As the years passed Bhuwad Raja grew old, and his hold on Gujarat relaxed. At last Wanraj drove all his soldiers and servants back to Kalyani. In February,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

A.D. 56, he founded a new capital, which he called Anhilwada, after Anhil, a shepherd who had been his faithful comrade. It became one of the most famous cities in India, and saw the glories of the great Siddhraj and of many other renowned Rajput rulers of Wanraj's line. On the day of its foundation the Jain monks present prophesied that it would last for 541 years, and that is what befell. In A.D. 1297 the glorious city was destroyed utterly by the barbarian armies of the Afghan Ala ud din Khilji, the wicked and faithless emperor of Delhi.

VIII

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

IN the year A.D. 1024 the Musulman menace seemed at any rate to the fortunate inhabitants of Gujarat of no importance. It is true that Sind had been a Musulman country ever since the Arab invasion and conquest; but the Rajputs had often defeated the Sindis. That there were wild tribes beyond the Afghan passes, hungry for the treasures of Hindustan, did not occur to the contented and opulent citizens of Western India. Afghan raiders had indeed invaded and even occupied the Panjab; but internal strife had weakened them, and they had not dared to risk the fortune of battle against the valiant knights of Rajasthan. Suddenly Mahmud, the sultan of Ghazni, having subdued his rivals and enemies, enlisted an army of furious fanatics and declared that he would destroy the shrine of Someshwar, or Shiva the Moongod, on the coast of Kathiawar. The destruction and plunder of this rich

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

and famous temple would satisfy at once his greed and his bigotry.

On the throne of Gujarat was then seated Bhimdev, an heroic prince of the Chalukya dynasty. He had been reigning two years and had succeeded his uncle, Durlabha Raja, who, when he grew old and Bhimdev grew to manhood, abdicated in his nephew's favour. He himself went with his brother, Nagraja, the new king's father, into the forest and lived there as an ascetic until his death.

The young ruler was in every way worthy of his kingly office and well suited to protect from a foreign invader his country and his people. He has been described by the bard, Krishnaji, as strong and tall, a practised Bowman and a skilful and valiant warrior. During the first two years of his reign he was engaged in a successful war against his Sindi neighbours, and in extending southwards and eastwards the frontiers of Gujarat. Suddenly there came to Bhimdev the news that a powerful Afghan army, led by Mahmud of Ghazni, had in a month's time cut their way through the Panjab and Rajputana and were advancing by forced marches on Bhimdev's

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

own capital, Anhilwada. So rapid, indeed, was Mahmud's progress that Bhimdev had no time to warn his feudatories or mobilize the royal forces. Without a numerous army it was impossible to defend the wide circuit of the capital's fortifications. There was but one thing to do. Bhimdev left Anhilwada to its fate and retired to the mountains, where he strove to raise a force sufficient to drive out the invader. Mahmud did not stay long in Anhilwada. His bigoted mind was bent on destroying the temple of Someshwar. The plunder of Anhilwada might await his return; and it was not long before he arrived before the walls of Prabhas Patan, the stronghold that guarded the great fane. Yet, notwithstanding the swiftness of Mahmud's advance, Bhimdev had contrived to throw some troops into Prabhas Patan.

The country all round Someshwar was doubly sacred to the pious Rajput. Besides the great temple to Shiva, the spot was hallowed as the scene of Krishna's death. It was to the shore close by that the wise old king had taken from Dwarka his subjects that they might by their worship appease the anger of

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

the immortal gods. The townsmen of Dwarka had disobeyed their divine King's ordinance, and had drunk greedily of the wine that he had forbidden them. They then fought each other until all were destroyed. Weary with age and grief, Krishna took shelter at a spot still marked by a small shrine. As he rested, a hunter called Jara shot him, and his soul was carried thence to India's heaven.

Such history, sanctified by the belief of millions, was rejected with scorn by the Musulman bigot. After massacring the helpless inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, so as to terrorize the defenders of Prabhas Patan, Mahmud advanced close to the city walls and sent his heralds to demand its surrender. The valiant Rajputs from within beckoned to the heralds to approach and when they came within earshot denounced Mahmud as a Mleccha, or barbarian, and warned them that their king and his troops had better depart or the gods of India would destroy them. For that purpose only the gods had allowed the outcasts to advance so far. The Asghan king, furious at the unexpected defiance, unfurled the green banner of Islam and ordered

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

an immediate assault. The Afghans archers cleared the walls of their defenders and, under cover of their arrows, the footsoldiers swarmed up the battlements. Once, however, the assaulting force were no longer protected by their bowmen, the Rajputs rallied and counter-attacked. The storming parties were killed or driven back; but the first wave of assault was followed by many others. Still none had more than a momentary success. When the sun set and the short Indian twilight had passed into night, the walls of Somnath were once more free from enemies and firmly held by the victorious Hindus.

The second day was merely a repetition of the first, and so heavy were the losses of the storming parties, that Bhimdev, who had come with a large Rajput force to relieve, if possible, the town, thought the time favourable for an attempt to raise the siege. The shock of the Rajput cavalry was such that the fate of the Afghans hung in the balance. They wavered; had they broken and fled not one would have survived. Mahmud, in despair, leaped from his horse, threw himself prostrate on the ground, imploring the assistance of

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Allah. Then, taking a gallant Circassian officer by the hand, he called on his troops to follow him and charged the enemy. Put to shame by their king, the Afghans rallied and charged too. The counter-attack was successful, and Bhimdev's relieving force was defeated with heavy loss. Still the Rajputs' effort had not been without result. While Mahmud was fighting with the courage of despair against the relieving army, the Rajput garrison had skilfully evacuated the town and, joining Bhimdev at an appointed spot, they placed themselves once more under the king's orders

Although the garrison had for military reasons left Prabhas Patan, its townsmen still fought on. From time to time they ran back from the lines into the temples and prostrating themselves before the images of their gods, drew fresh strength from them and rushed with renewed fury to man the walls. Still the valour of an untrained mob can merely delay the advance of a trained army. It was not many hours before Mahmud had made himself master of Prabhas Patan and could gratify both his lust for destruction and his

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

greed for plunder by sacking the temple of Someshwar. In the centre of the shrine was a gigantic lingam, the sacred emblem of the god Shiva. Beneath were recesses in which the Brahmins kept the god's jewels and ceremonial dress. The Ghaznavid raised his mace to smash in pieces the lingam; the priests, horrified at the thought of such sacrilege, offered the king vast sums of money to spare it. No money would tempt the fanatic. He shattered the lingam, plundered the jewels and, having taken everything of value from Prabhas Patan, led his army in pursuit of Bhimdev. The Rajput had retreated to the island of Bet at the north-western point of the Kathiawar peninsula. There Bhimdev sought to gain time to collect a larger army; but Mahmud, taking advantage of an exceptionally low tide, crossed to the island, seeking to end the war by the capture of the Rajput king. He failed; for Bhimdev, realising the danger, crossed the dividing sea and reached the mainland with his troops under cover of darkness. Mahmud, furious at his ill success, massacred all male Hindus in the island and enslaved and converted forcibly to Islam all

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

the women, among whom were several relatives of Bhimdev.

Mahmud, after plundering Kathiawar, returned, laden with booty, to Anhilwada, the capital of Gujarat. He liked its climate, and talked vaguely of making it his permanent residence, but Bhimdev did not leave long his enemy in peace. In the Gujarat hills he collected the chivalry of Gujarat, and to his banners flocked volunteers from Rajputana and a strong contingent of regular troops led by Vesuldev, the raja of Ajmir. With a reorganized and powerful force Bhimdev became daily bolder. He destroyed outlying Afghan posts and gradually drove Mahmud's soldiery to take refuge within the walls of Anhilwada. During the rainy season the Afghans, unused to the damp and oppressive heat of Gujarat, died in great numbers. The green forage sickened their Turcoman horses; and at last, so evil was the king's situation, that he decided to retreat during the following winter, abandon his Gujarat conquests and regain Ghazni.

When the rains ceased and the sodden earth dried, the Afghan army, reduced by half

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

through fighting, disease and desertion, struck their camp and marched north-east towards Rajputana. They never reached their goal. When they came to the mountain passes through which they had marched south, they found them and the adjoining hills held in strength by Bhimdev's soldiers and his Bhil allies. Vainly Mahmud tried to cut a way for himself and his retreating troops. All his efforts were useless. Time after time his attacks were foiled by showers of arrows and headlong charges of the gallant Rajput cavalry. At last even Mahmud recognised that he could never return by the way he had come. Sad and dejected, the beaten Afghans fell back on Anhilwada and the enemy, whom they had once despised, harassed them mercilessly as they went.

On reaching Anhilwada, Mahmud began his preparations for a retreat through the Sind desert. It was no light task; but to give the Afghan monarch his due, he was a great captain as well as a ferocious barbarian. With great skill he led his weary troops to the edge of the Sind desert, thwarting Bhimdev's repeated attempts to destroy his army. At last

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

the Rajput king gave up further pursuit as useless. The Sind desert would either engulf the barbarians for ever or would cause them such loss and suffering that they would never come back. That is indeed what happened. The Hindu tribesmen in the desert oases showed them the wrong road. Mahmud's remaining cavalry horses died from want of forage. Thousands of Afghans perished of thirst and privation. One of their guides, a disguised Brahman priest of Someshwar temple, deliberately led them further and further into the desert's recesses. At last, when his treachery was discovered and he was condemned to death, he proclaimed proudly that he had come for no other purpose but to avenge their insults to a Hindu faith, and he prophesied, in triumphant exultation, that the deaths of both sovereign and soldiers would speedily follow his own.

The guide's prophecy was not fulfilled. A happy chance enabled the derelict army to find an oasis and an abundant spring. By it they stayed until they had renewed their strength; then they again set out on their way home. With great difficulty they reached

BHIMDEV I OF ANHILWADA

Multan, but there they were heavily attacked by the Jats. It was not until the spring of A.D. 1026, two years after their triumphant departure, that Mahmud reached Ghazni. The bones of two-thirds of his soldiers lay scattered in Gujarat or on the line of his retreat, while the plunder that he had hoped to bring back, had been abandoned in the trackless wastes of the Sind desert.

By his valour Bhimdev had saved his country and had postponed the Musulman conquest for two and a half centuries.

For many years this great prince was spared to rule over the subjects whom he had saved from a foreign tyranny. He had three sons, Mulraj, Kshemraj and Karan. Of Mulraj, who predeceased his father, a charming tale has survived. One year the rains failed in Gujarat and the villagers were in many places unable to pay the royal dues on their land. Bhimdev, thinking that they refused to pay in a rebellious spirit, sent for their headmen to Anhilwada. They came trembling and in great fear that they would be imprisoned until they found the money. Mulraj, who chanced to see them, went among them and

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

learned the true facts of the case. He waited until Bhimdev came out of the palace and then, in front of him, performed such exquisite feats of horsemanship, that the king, delighted at his son's performance, told him to ask for a boon. The only boon that the prince would ask for was the remission of the villagers' debts; at the same time he explained that their failure to pay was due to a visitation of God, that they could not have averted. The king granted the boon and next year, when abundant rain fell, the same headmen brought of their own free will two years' dues to the royal treasury.

As his uncle had done before him, Bhimdev, when he felt old age too great a burden, abdicated in favour of his second son, Kshemraj, but the prince, devotedly attached to his father, refused to leave him. The throne of Anhilwada, therefore, passed to Karan, the youngest of the three princes. As long as Bhimdev lived, Kshemraj attended his father. When Bhimdev died Kshemraj spent the rest of his life as an ascetic at Mandikeshwar, on the banks of the Saraswati river.

IX

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

At the end of the twelfth century, A.D., Udayaditya, a Parmar Rajput, ruled the State of Dhar in Malwa or Central India. He had succeeded on the throne the great King Bhoj, whose name is still revered by the peasantry,¹ and he most worthily maintained the royal dignity. He had two queens, one a beautiful woman of the Waghela clan, another less comely, a Solanki princess. The beautiful Waghela queen had a son, Prince Rindhawal, who was fair, but otherwise of no great promise. The plainer Solanki lady gave to Udayaditya a splendid son, Jagdev. He was two years younger than Rindhawal; and although he had a dark complexion he was tall and handsome beyond his years. Owing to the attraction of the Waghela queen and also Rindhawal's

¹ This is shewn by the common proverb "Kahan Raja Bhoj, kahan Ganga teli" (Where is King Bhoj and where is Ganga the oilman) It is used to emphasize the difference between the supremely great and the supremely lowly

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

earlier birth, Udayaditya acknowledged Rindhawal as his successor on the throne of Dhar.

King Udayaditya cared so little for his Solanki wife, that he sent her away from court and gave her only the produce of a single village, Tansogam, to support her and his son. Indeed when the boy was twelve years old, the king actually asked Mudar, one of his household, whether he had a son by the Solanki queen or not. Mudar replied—

“The Solanki queen has indeed a son called Jagdev, but he never comes to the palace.”

Udayaditya ordered Jagdev’s attendance, but was astonished when the lad appeared. He was dressed like a peasant in a coarse coat and turban and without any such ornaments or rings, as young princes are wont to wear. His face and bearing, however, were noble, and the king in admiration took the lad in his arms and seated him by the throne. Then he said: “My son, why do you wear such clothes?”

Jagdev boldly replied: “I dress like that because I must. I am son of the greatest king in all Malwa, yet I can hardly afford to buy salt. My mother’s village is called Tansogam

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

(Three good villages), but its yield is not equal to its name. Its produce just gives enough food to live on, but there is nothing over for my clothes." The king was touched at the boy's poverty, and gave him a bag of money for a new dress. He also told his treasurer to pay his son an allowance of four rupees a day.

Jagdev gladly accepted the purse, but with a wisdom beyond his years, warned the king that he would never get the allowance. The Waghela queen would find means to have it stopped; and so it turned out. When the prince's stepmother heard of the allowance and the gift of the purse, she grew very angry and pressed the king to stop the one and take back the other. The king weakly agreed to stop the allowance, but, like a true Rajput, refused to take back a present that he had bestowed. The Waghela queen was still full of anger:

"His skin is black," she said, "and so will his fortunes be! Why do you praise him?"

Not long afterwards the Raja of Mandu, whose ally Udayaditya was, needed the help

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

of Dhar, and Udayaditya joined the Mandu army with his contingent. He was away for three years, and in the meantime his two sons grew up. Jagdev grew into a charming youth, and so good was his repute that Gambhir, the Raja of Godnagar, wished to give to him his daughter in marriage. The Waghela queen contrived to get the girl promised to Rindhawal instead. The Raja of Godnagar was angry at the trick played on him and insisted that Jagdev should be present at the marriage, too, otherwise he would not celebrate it. This time the Waghela queen had to agree. She gave Jagdev new robes and jewellery, a fine horse and a fitting escort. On the way the cavalcade camped at Toda Tonk, half way between Jaipur and Ajimir. As it happened, Raja Raj, chief of Toda Tonk, wanted a husband for his daughter, Virmati, and offered her to Jagdev, who accepted her hand. She was still too young to live with him, so she stayed with her parents. Jagdev went on to Godnagar. After the marriage of Rindhawal had been fitly celebrated all the guests returned home. Not long afterwards Udayaditya returned to Dhar. Rindhawal went to meet

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

him, but not Jagdev. The king asked where Jagdev was, and hearing that he was with his mother at Tansogam, sent for him. Again the lad appeared in a peasant's dress and turban. Stricken with remorse at his son's poverty, the king gave him jewels, a dagger, a sword and the best horse in his stable.

Directly the Waghela queen heard of the gifts, she grew as angry as before and again pressed the king to revoke them. At first the king refused point-blank. Then she said:

"At least take back the dagger, the sword and the horse. They were not yours to give. They belong to the State and on your death will pass to your successor."

The king gave way, and ordered Jagdev to return them. The prince was so disgusted at his father's weakness that he resolved to seek service with his father-in-law. He took with him two bags of gold coins, his bow and arrows and his sword. Making obeisance to his mother, the Solanki queen, he sprang on his horse and rode away from Dhar.

When he neared Toda Tonk, it was yet noon; so he halted outside the town, wishing to enter it towards evening. Just then his

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

wife, Virmati, whose husband had been continually in her thoughts, was being taken in a palanquin to a pavilion close to her husband's camp. Seeing the tents, she sent one of her maids to pick wild fruit. The maid guessed that she was also to find out who the stranger was. While the maid was picking fruit, Jagdev passed close to her and she at once recognised him as her mistress' husband. She stopped picking the berries and ran back to the pavilion. She took Virmati to a spot where she could peep through a hedge and the princess also recognised Jagdev. She slipped out of her hiding place, made obeisance to her lord and asked him timidly why he had thus come without warning. He told her his whole story; but before he had finished it, the maid had run to the palace and spread the news. Prince Briaj, Virmati's brother, galloped to the pavilion and took Jagdev to the palace of Raja Raj, where he did homage.

For five days the young Parmar and his wife's relations feasted together; then in spite of their entreaties that he should stay at Toda Tonk, he changed his mind and resolved to seek his fortunes in a wider field. That

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

night Jagdev told Virmati that he must leave her. Virmati, however, would not be parted from her newly-found husband. She threw her arms round him and said:

“ I am the shadow of your body. When you can rid yourself of your shadow, then only will you rid yourself of me.”

Jagdev had perforce to consent to Virmati accompanying him. He thus disclosed to his wife that he meant to take service with the great Siddhraj Jaysing, king of Anhilwada and all Gujarat. He asked a passing Rajput the way. The traveller pointed it out, and also told them that the next stage was Toduri.

“ By the direct path Toduri is only twenty miles off; but that path is infested by a pair of tigers and none dares go along it. By the longer but safer way Toduri is thirty miles off.”

Jagdev replied: “ We shall go by the shorter way.”

The Rajput at first protested, but at last pointed out the shorter road and the Parmar and his wife rode off together. When they had gone twelve miles, Virmati said to Jagdev: “ Royal prince, the tigress is in front of us.”

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Jagdev fitted an arrow to his bow and called scornfully to the tigress: "Tigress, you are only a female. I have no wish to kill you, go your way."

At the sound of the prince's voice the tigress charged. Jagdev let fly his arrow and so surely was it aimed that it struck the tigress between the eyes and passed through its skull. The monster sprang into the air as it charged and fell dead. A hundred yards further on they saw the tiger, the dead brute's mate, crouching on the road. Jagdev fitted another arrow to his bow and cried, mocking it:

"Go to the right or the left, you foolish beast, or else I shall send you to keep your wife company."

As Jagdev spoke, the tiger gave a roar and sprang at him. The prince's arrow struck it in the forehead and killed it on the spot. Virmati clapped her hands with delight and cried:

"My lord, this is indeed royal sport."

After some days the princely pair reached Anhilwada, and there King Siddhraj took such a fancy to Jagdev that he offered him a grant of land, if he would enter his service. Instead

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

of land Jagdev asked for a daily wage of a thousand crowns. The generous king replied: "I shall give you a daily wage not of one but two thousand crowns," and he gave orders accordingly to his treasurer.

Jagdev and Virmati were very happy in Siddhraj's service; and in the course of four years Virmati bore her lord two sons, Jag Dhawal and Bij Dhawal. King Siddhraj, too, grew fond of Jagdev and his family; but the hearts of the Anhilwada nobles were consumed with jealousy because of the great daily wage that Jagdev received: "Every day as soon as the sun rises," they grumbled, "this worthless fellow gets two thousand crowns, and for them he does nothing."

One dark night in September some of the Rajput nobles on guard heard a strange noise. It seemed as if some women were singing joyful songs and that others were wailing and crooning dirges. They reported the matter to the king. He sent for Jagdev and ordered him to go and see what the noise was. Next morning he should report what he had seen. Jagdev saluted and taking his weapons and armour stepped into the darkness. At the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

same time the king sent word to others of his nobles to go and see also and report. Some sent a message to the king to bid Jagdev go and so let him prove that he was really worth two thousand crowns a day. The others pretended to get up, rattled their swords and armour as if they were buckling them on and then climbed back into their beds and went to sleep.

Siddhraj, putting on a dark cloak, followed Jagdev to see what he would do. The Rajput prince went in an easterly direction, as the noise seemed to come thence. Siddhraj, treading as softly as he could, followed at a few paces behind him. In this order they reached the city gates of Anhilwada, through which they passed. A little further on they came upon eight women, four of whom were wailing and four laughing as they sang.

Jagdev went up to the wailing women and said: "In God's name, ladies, who are you? Are you phantoms or ghosts or witches? Why do four of you wail and four of you laugh?" The weeping women replied:

"We are the Fates of Anhilwada. Tomorrow morning at ten o'clock Raja Siddhraj

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

will die. This we know and we are mourning for our king."

Jagdev turned to the laughing women, who were a few steps away:

"Who are you, fair ladies?" he said and bowed, "and why do you sing so gaily?"

"We are the Fates of Delhi," answered the laughing women. "We laugh with delight because to-morrow Siddhraj will die and Anhilwada will lose its splendour. Then Delhi will have no rival in all India. To-morrow, when the king prepares for worship and is putting on his robe of yellow silk, we shall strike him dead and bear away his soul to yonder chariot."

"Is there no way by which he may escape? For in all the earth there is no king like Siddhraj."

"There is one way," answered the Fates of Delhi: "if one of his nobles equal in birth to the king cuts off his head and offers it to us, Siddhraj will live, not otherwise."

"Will my head avail?" asked Jagdev.

"Yes," said the Fates of Delhi, "if you offer your life for his, we shall accept it in exchange."

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Jagdev said: "I am ready to give you my life; but first I must get my wife's consent."

"Go," laughed the Delhi Fates, "but we shall never see you again; for what wife would give her husband leave to kill himself?"

Nevertheless Jagdev walked homewards, and Siddhraj, who had overheard the talk, followed to see what would happen. Jagdev went to Virmati's room and told her what had passed and asked her to consent to his giving his life to save the king's.

"O joyous day!" cried the gallant lady, "now at least you can repay the generosity of our king. But I have a favour to ask you. Let me sacrifice my life with yours."

"But what of our children?"

"Let us offer their lives as well," cried the dauntless Rajputni.

Each took a son by the hand and all four went to where the Fates of Delhi were singing.

"Well," asked their leader, smiling, "have you got your wife's leave?"

"How many years of life will my head bring to king Siddhraj?" asked Jagdev by way of answer.

"Twelve years."

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

“ Then take our four lives and grant our king forty-eight years.”

The Fates of Delhi agreed.

Jagdev drew his sword and with a stroke cut off the head of Jag Dhawal, his eldest son; he then put Bij Dhawal in front of him. The Fates of Delhi, touched by such loyalty, stopped him. They sprinkled ambrosia over the dead boy’s body and brought him back to life.

“ Keep your own life and the lives of your wife and children,” said the Fates of Delhi, smiling gaily. “ We shall give forty-eight years to king Siddhraj just the same.”

Jagdev and Virmati went home leading their sons, and Siddhraj, without revealing himself, went back to his palace.

Next morning Siddhraj called to his hall of audience all his nobles, including Jagdev Parmar. He asked Jagdev whether he had found out what the noise was the previous night. Jagdev replied modestly that he had searched everywhere, but had seen no one.

The Rajput nobles, who had gone back to bed, sneered and said contemptuously:

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

"Jagdev no doubt lost his way in the dark. We, however, went and found out what the noise was. We came upon two carts. In the first were two beggar-men and two beggar-women. One of the women had borne a son and so all in the cart were singing and laughing happily. In the second cart were two other beggars, men and women; but they had just lost a son and so they were weeping."

Siddhraj grew angry and told his courtiers what he had himself seen, adding that if he paid to Jagdev daily two million crowns instead of two thousand crowns, he would still be Jagdev's debtor. Thereafter he gave Jagdev two thousand villages and a cocoanut as a sign that he bestowed on him the hand of his daughter. To this marriage Virmati consented with the admirable fidelity of a Rajput wife.

"You are a great lord," she said, "you should have in your palace not two wives but four."

Afterwards Siddhraj and Jagdev married two sisters, the daughters of the Jadeja Raja of Bhujnagar; thus Jagdev became son-in-law and brother-in-law of the great king of

JAGDEV PARMAR OF DHAR

Anhilwada. For some years the two heroes lived happily together; but in the end Siddhraj seems to have grown jealous of Jagdev. In any case, Jagdev, after eighteen years of faithful service, begged leave to return to Dhar, where his father, Udayaditya, was in failing health. The leave was granted and with Virmati and her two co-wives and their children the prince set out with five thousand horses and eight thousand cavalry. At Virmati's native town they were received with great pomp, and thence the procession went to Dhar. Udayaditya went himself to meet them, and at Jagdev's wish led them to the Solanki queen, who greeted her son as beffitted a proud mother. Then he went to the Waghela queen, whom with a Rajput's admirable generosity he forgave for all the harm that she had done him:

“Mother, my fame is yours; for had I not left Dhar, I should never have gained any.”

Not long afterwards Udayaditya felt himself to be on the point of death. He sent for both his sons. In the presence of his ministers and nobles, he appointed as his successor Jagdev, and gave to Rindhawal a hundred villages and bade him obey his brother. On

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Udayaditya's death Jagdev succeeded and ruled Dhar for fifty-two years, dying at the age of eighty-five. His three wives survived him but a little space, for with the splendid courage of their caste, they passed through the flames to join their husbands in a future life; and Prince Jag Dhawal reigned over Dhar in his father's stead.

X

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

IN all Gujarat history there is no more inspiring figure than that of Ra Khengar. His father was Ra Nowghun, a Chudasama Rajput, the king of Junagadh town, of the great fort of Girnar and of many wide lands besides. Ra Nowghun had once demanded in marriage the daughter of the prince of Umota in the far off region of Rewa Kanta; and although the prince was unwilling to send his daughter so far away, so great was his fear of Ra Nowghun, that he had perforce to consent. His son, Hansraj by name, declared that his father had played a poltroon's part and vowed that he would himself slay Ra Nowghun and bring his sister back to Umota. Ra Nowghun retaliated by vowing that some day he would with his own hand slay Hansraj.

Nor was this the only feud into which Ra Nowghun's fiery spirit led him. When his bridal procession was going from Umota to

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Junagadh, it passed near Jasdor. The ruler of that town laughed mockingly and said that if the walls of his fort of Bhuwado had been finished, he would have carried off the bride and married her himself. When this jibe was repeated to Ra Nowghun, he vowed that he would break down the walls of the fort, finished or unfinished, and slay its king.

Before he could carry out either of these threats, Ra Nowghun was so unlucky as to meet the great King Siddhraj of Anhilwada in battle. He was completely defeated and taken prisoner; not only that, but Siddhraj made his captive stand before him unarmed and his mouth filled with grass, and thus humiliated ask for pardon. After he had made his submission, Siddhraj released him, but Ra Nowghun, once he had regained Junagadh, swore that he would avenge himself by breaking down one of the gates of his conqueror's capital, Anhilwada.

Finally Siddhraj's household bard composed on his king's triumphant return a lay that praised his master's valour and ridiculed Ra Nowghun's defeat. Hearing this lay repeated, Ra Nowghun was beside himself with rage,

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

and he took a fourth oath that he would split open the bard's cheeks and so punish his insolence.

Before he could fulfil any of these vows, Ra Nowghun fell ill, possibly through rage at the various insults that he had suffered; and he realized at last that he would die without making good his promises. He called to his bedside his four sons and promised the throne of Junagadh to the prince who would undertake to carry out the tasks that he had vowed to perform. The hearts of the three sons shrank from the prospect, and they were especially unwilling to do injury to the sacred person of a bard, even though fed by the bounty of a foeman. The eldest, Raidhun, undertook to destroy the fort of Bhuvado. To him the dying Ra Nowghun gave a fief of four villages. The second son, Shersing, offered not only to destroy the fort of Bhuvado, but also to kill Hansraj. To him the king gave eight villages. The third Chandrasing promised to destroy the fort, kill Hansraj and break down a gate of Anhilwada. To him the king gave twelve villages. The fourth son, Ra Khengar, alone declared himself willing

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

to destroy the fort, kill Hansraj, break down a gate of Anhilwada and split the bard's cheeks. Ra Nowghun was so pleased that he at once resigned the crown in Ra Khengar's favour and lived as his son's subject for the short space left to him.

Once the days of mourning for the dead king had been observed, Ra Khengar set out with his army to keep his promises. With ease he drove the Raja of Jasdan into his fort of Bhuvado and although its walls had long been completed, Ra Khengar took it by storm and killed the Raja, who had jibed at his father. Without returning to Junagadh, he advanced by forced marches to Umcta, seized his mother's brother Hansraj and executed him publicly, so that all men might learn how to respect a Chudasama Rajput. Then he returned in triumph to Junagadh.

Ra Khengar dared not declare war against the great Siddhraj, until that king, tempted by ambition, led his army into Malwa. Ra Khengar, at the head of all his cavalry, rode for life and death to Anhilwada. It was weakly garrisoned, as most of the Gujarat troops had followed the king into Central

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

India. Ra Kkengar and his men dismounted and with hardly any fighting broke down one of the city gates and entering through it made prisoner the very bard, who in verse had ridiculed Ra Nowghun. Arriving at his palace in Junagadh, Ra Khengar ordered on pain of death the captive bard to sing a lay in praise of Ra Khengar's feat and so make amends for his previous insolence. The wretched minstrel was too frightened not to obey and he sang an extempore song, praising the valour and daring of Ra Khengar. The king went up to him and filled his mouth so full of pearls, rubies and other precious stones, that his cheeks well nigh burst. At last the onlookers cried out:

“ His cheeks are split! His cheeks are split!”

Ra Khengar then let the minstrel go, for he said that he had honoured his father's promise, for he had made the bard's cheeks split, although with jewels and precious stones and not a dagger. This was, as he said, the only way to treat a bard.

Thereafter he inflicted a further humiliation on his father's old enemy, King Siddhraj, by carrying off his affianced bride. She was

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

the Princess Ranik Devi and this is her romantic story. She was a Rajput lady of the Parmar clan, whose father ruled over the desert lands of Sind and was named Ror Raja. At her birth the royal astrologers foretold that whoever married the baby princess would lose his throne. Her father was so troubled at this, that he ordered her to be exposed in the forest and left to perish. Before any wild beast could devour her, a potter named Harmatdev found the infant, picked it up and took it home. She grew up so beautiful that although she was, as everyone believed, only a potter's daughter, yet a prince called Lakha Falani wished to marry her. Harmatdev, afraid that he would have to reveal her origin and his own conduct in rescuing her, made excuses and fled from Sind to Mahajaywada in Kathiawar.

It so happened that four royal bards from the court of king Siddhraj happened to pass through Mahajaywadi and there saw the lovely Ranik Devi. Wherever she moved, to quote the poetic simile in the ballad, she left the impress of her feet in rose colour on the ground. Struck with her amazing beauty, the bards

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

hastened to return to Anhilwada, sure that king Siddhraj would reward them, if they told him about the beautiful maiden. When Siddhraj heard their tale, he was at first inclined to scoff and told them to wait until they had seen the comely queens whom he already possessed. He had no less than sixteen and in the palace of each one he in turn entertained the bards to dinner. They looked and admired them all but said sadly:

“Your queens, king Siddhraj, are so fair that they would put the moon to shame, yet they are far behind the loveliness of Ranik Devi.”

At once king Siddhraj bade the bards return to Mahajaywadi and make on his behalf an offer of marriage to the father of Ranik Devi. The poor potter, who knew that the girl was not his daughter, was very loth to promise her to Siddhraj. They, however, threatened him with the king’s vengeance, if he did not consent. The poor potter on the horns of a dilemma had perforce to yield; and the hand of Ranik Devi was promised to the great king of Anhilwada. Before the marriage could be celebrated King Siddhraj went with his army into Malwa.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Now it happened that Ra Khengar had two nephews, the sons of his sister, who had married a kinsman of King Siddhraj. Their names were Dehal and Vihal and they were both in the service of their uncle, Ra Khengar. One day as they were camped near the village of Mahajaywadi, they heard rumours of the surpassing beauty of Ranik Devi; also they learnt that she was betrothed to king Siddhraj. They returned at once to Junagadh and told Ra Khengar. He was furious; for the maiden lived within his dominions and Siddhraj should have obtained her sovereign's leave, before he betrothed himself to her. King Siddhraj had slighted him and he swore that he would be avenged. Unbuckling his sword, he said to Dehal:

“Take my sword and according to Rajput custom marry to it Ranik Devi!”

With a body of horsemen Dehal rode back to Mahajaywadi and demanded that Ranik Devi should at once be married to Ra Khengar's sword, a valid marriage, that would have made the maiden Ra Khengar's queen. The potter was terrified, and confessed that she was not his daughter at all, but a Parmar princess,

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

whom he had saved when exposed in the Sind forests. In any event Siddhraj would in due course return from Malwa and send a marriage procession to take Ranik Devi away. Hearing of her union with Ra Khengar, he would certainly kill her father. Dehal, however, would not listen. Growing impatient, he seized Ranik Devi and made to carry her off. The potter still protested:

“ King Siddhraj will tear up your fortress of Girnar by the roots and fling its stones in all directions.”

Dehal swung Ranik Devi on his saddle bow and laughing cried: “ We have fifty thousand horses in our stables and Ra Khengar has no fear of Siddhraj.”

Dehal rode off with the maid to Junagadh; but as she crossed the threshold of Ra Khengar’s palace, she struck her foot so sharply against a stone that the skin was cut and her foot began to bleed. She sighed and said: “ This is a bad omen and widowhood and the ruin of my country await me.”

When, however, the maiden saw the splendid person and bearing of Ra Khengar, her husband to be, she became reconciled to her destiny.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Ra Khengar feasted the people of Junagadh for two days, including even the outcastes. Among those invited were some wild hunters called Waghris. After the feasting was over, the Waghris left Junagadh and went in search of game in the lands of Anhilwada. They had just netted a bluebull, when the four bards of Siddhraj rode up. They had been ordered to fetch Ranik Devi to the royal palace, the hunters told the bards that this was no longer possible, as they themselves had seen Ranik Devi married to Ra Khengar. The bards' further enquiries confirmed this story and they rode disconsolately back to Anhilwada.

Siddhraj, who had not long returned from Malwa, thus learnt that in his absence Ra Khengar had not only broken down the gate of his capital city, but had also borne away his affianced bride. There was nothing left for him to do but declare war. This he did, and in a number of battles he defeated Ra Khengar. At last he drove him into the fortress of Girnar; but that was impregnable. For twelve years Siddhraj besieged it in vain, and in spite of the help of Babro, the chief of the demons whom Siddhraj had in his despair

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

invoked, and the enchantments of his mother, Mainal Devi, who was skilled in sorceries, he made no progress at all. At last the magic arts of Mainal Devi had their effect. Without any cause, therefore, but driven to it by the spells of Siddhraj's mother, Ra Khengar began to suspect his nephew Dehal of too great intimacy with Ranik Devi. At last he ordered him and his brother Vihal to leave Girnar fort. The same night they decided to flee. At one of the fort gates they were challenged by the sentries. To them they explained that they had orders from Ra Khengar to fetch within the walls several bullocks laden with opium. They would return after midnight and the sentries should at once open the gates and lead them back into the fortress.

Once outside the gates the two brothers galloped to the tent of Siddhraj, to whom, as I have said, they were related through their mother. The king received them as kinsmen and to him they told the facts of their expulsion, and offered to lead his men into the Girnar fortress, if in return, he gave them the crown of Junagadh. The king saw his chance and

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

agreed. He concealed seven score picked men in bullocks' panniers and told Dehal and Vihal to go back with them to the Girnar fortress. On reaching the gates the brothers killed the sentries, the soldiers sprang out of their bullock panniers and held the entrance until Siddhraj, who with a large force was following close behind, joined them. By this time the gallant Ra Khengar had heard what had happened, and with the garrison tried to stop Siddhraj's entry; but their valour was useless. Ra Khengar and his troops were cut down to a man.

Dehal then led Siddhraj to the palace porch and called out "Aunt, it is I, Dehal. Ra Khengar is with me, so open the doors." Ranik Devi believed the traitor's word, unlocked the doors and so let her enemies enter. Siddhraj demanded her hand in marriage as her betrothed; but during her twelve years of wifehood, Ranik Devi had grown to love the knightly and chivalrous Ra Khengar, to whom she had borne two sons Manero and Dyagacho. She refused point blank to wed Siddhraj. The king of Anhilwada, flushed with victory, threatened, if she did not marry him, to kill

RA KHENGAR OF JUNAGADH

her two sons. Ranik Devi, never dreaming that a Rajput king would degrade himself by murdering two children (for the boys were only eleven and five), still refused. Then Siddhraj lost all self-control and cut down Manero before his mother's eyes. He also threatened to slay Dyagacho too, unless she promised to be his wife; but if she had no love for Siddhraj before, she had nothing but loathing for him after the murder of her son and she rejected his new offer with scorn and hatred. Siddhraj then, in his fury, murdered Dyagacho as well. Ranik Devi retaliated by declaring herself a sati. She thus invested herself with a sacred character, that rendered all Siddhraj's wooing useless. The king asked her where she wished to go:

“I wish to go to Wadhwan,” replied the beautiful widow.

The king, sick at heart, went with her. At Wadhwan she ordered a funeral pile to be built for her on the banks of the Bhogawo river. Siddhraj, still hoping against hope, forbade anyone to light the wood stack:

“If you are a true sati,” he said, “the pyre will catch fire of itself.”

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Ranik Devi prostrated herself to the sungod and prayed to him to light the funeral pile. Just then there came across the wide flat plain a wind so hot that the wood caught fire. The king threw his scarf over Ranik Devi in a last attempt to make her his queen, but the valiant lady threw it back:

“ If you wish to be my husband in a future life, burn now at my side.”

Her lover sorrowfully turned away. He built a beautiful temple to his lost lady, of which the ornamented spires can still be seen. Thereafter he extended his rule over all Kathiawar. When Dehal reminded the king of his promise to put him on the throne of Junagadh, he at first agreed. Then, thinking that Dehal would surely betray him, as he had betrayed his own uncle, Siddhraj caused to be executed both him and his brother Vihal

Thus the knightly Ra Khengar was avenged. His widow, Ranik Devi, passed through the flames to join him, and if his kingdom fell, yet those through whom it fell, perished also

XI

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

IN A.D. 1535 the Jadeja Rajputs led by their Jam or Sovereign Rawal crossed from Cutch to Kathiawar. They made themselves masters of its north-western provinces and built as their capital the city of Nawanagar. They would soon have occupied not only all Kathiawar, but also all Gujarat, but for the swift and terrible rise of the Moghuls under Akbar. When only thirteen he took into his capable hands the whole power of the empire. In 1567 and 1568 he conquered Rajputana, save for the Sisodia strongholds in the Aravali hills. In 1572 he invaded Gujarat and took prisoner its unfortunate ruler Sultan Muzaffir Shah.

In 1577 Akbar's viceroy, Shahabuddin Ahmad Khan, invading Kathiawar, marched on Junagadh and the Girnar. That great stronghold, that in Ra Khengar's time had stood a twelve years' siege, was held by the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Ghoris, an Afghan family, who, appointed governors, had made themselves independent. Amin Khan Ghori appealed for help to the Jadeja Rajputs of Nawanagar and urged that his own destruction would be followed by theirs. According to the chivalrous custom of the time, the Jadeja prince, Jam Sataji, sent his bow to Amin Khan Ghori, as a token that he would go to his aid. He sent an army under his wazir Jaso Ladak, who skilfully surprised and overcame a Moghul force near Junagadh and afterwards cut it to pieces near the sea by Jodinar. A second Moghul army, under a veteran soldier named Khurram, was despatched by the viceroy to avenge these defeats. When he sighted the Jamnagar troops Khurram pretended to be so afraid that he offered Jam Sataji an indemnity to let the Moghuls retire unmolested. The Jam fell into the trap, accepted the treacherous truce and withdrew with his men to Nawanagar. He left behind twenty thousand men under his wazir, Jaso Ladak, and his eldest son, Ajaji, to see that the Moghuls left the province. This was just what the perfidious Moghul had hoped. While the Rajputs, trusting unwisely

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

to the Moghul captain's honour, were celebrating their bloodless victory, Khurram, without any warning, attacked them. The surprise was complete and the Rajputs fell into such disorder that the wazir, Jaso Ladak, implored prince Ajaji to leave the field and ride for life and death to Nawanagar. The spirited boy flatly refused and, calling to his side his leading captains, he charged with such fury the Moghuls advancing in disarray, that the Jadeja infantry had time to reform. At the same time there rose high above the din of battle the voice of the royal bard, Kahandas, chanting the mighty deeds of Jam Rawal. The tide of battle turned. The Jadejas' courage and their knowledge of the ground enabled them to win a third victory as complete as the other two. The Moghul army fled in wild confusion, leaving on the field of battle fifteen thousand dead and wounded.

For the moment the Moghul menace was averted; but it was certain that the great Akbar would not suffer tamely such disasters. He recalled the viceroy of Gujarat and appointed in his place Mirza Kokiltash. To his support the emperor sent a great body of

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

picked Moghul troops and a large park of Turkish artillery.

Jam Sataji should have at once made similar preparations, but the chivalrous Rajput is so constituted that in the enjoyment of present glory he is often careless of future danger. He never deems any deed impossible to a Rajput's courage; and thus in his self-confidence he takes too few steps to ward off invasion, however imminent.

Nor were divine omens wanting, according to the *Vibhavvillas*, the chief history of Nawana-gar, to warn the Jadeja clan of their fearful peril. A Rajput named Bhuchar, so the legend runs, owned some hilly land near the town of Dhrol. It was commonly known as Bhucharmori. One morning his cowherd reported to Bhuchar that during the previous night, while he was watching his master's herds, he saw a flock of gigantic birds alight on the open ground. They were like no birds that he had ever seen, and although he could not follow what they said, they seemed to talk with human voices and to use some human speech. At first Bhuchar scoffed at the tale, but the cowherd spoke so earnestly that

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

Bhuchar resolved that night to watch also and thus test his servant's story. About midnight he and the herdsman saw alight close to them the same flock of monstrous birds. Some of them had faces like goats, some like lions and some even like men. Their plumage was of all colours, grey, black, yellow and white. They had terrible claws and no less terrible fangs. They spoke to each other with human voices, as the herdsman had said, but not in any tongue that Bhuchar had ever heard spoken. They stayed in the same spot all night and did not fly away until the dawn broke.

Bhuchar felt that he must let Jaso Ladak know. He rode to Hadiana, where the wazir happened to be camping, and told his story. Jaso Ladak consulted the astrologers and other wise men of the court. They thought deeply over the matter and declared that the strange birds must have power to read the future, and foresaw that a mighty battle, compared with which the battles in the Hindu epics would be as child's play, would be fought on that very spot.

When the wazir heard their opinion, he sent back with Bhuchar a Siddh or seer, who

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

had power to interpret the language of birds. He told Bhuchar to take the Siddh to the spot that night with orders to record exactly what the birds said. Bhuchar gave the Siddh pen, ink and paper and took him and the herdsman to the hut on Bhucharmori. As before, the monstrous birds came at midnight and began to talk. The Siddh wrote down the substance of what they said. They prophesied that on the ground where they alighted a bloody battle would be fought. In the dark half of the month of Shrawan (early September) the whole forces of the Moghuls and of the Jadejas would meet. Blood would flow in rivers; the heir to the throne, Prince Ajaji, Jaso Ladak, the wazir, and the bravest of the Jadejas would fall on the battlefield.

Bhuchar took the Siddh back to Hadiana and showed the writing to the wazir, who treated the matter lightly, but took the paper to Jam Sataji.

“Even though the birds’ saying be true,” he said “what does it matter? Many times the Musulmans have invaded our lands and died there. If others come, they too will lose their lives, just as their forerunners did.”

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

Jam Sataji was wiser than his wazir. Whether he believed the tale of the birds or not, he knew that a Moghul invasion was near at hand and he equipped a powerful army to meet it. He had not long to wait. The grand army of Delhi, over two hundred thousand strong, and led by three experienced commanders, Azam, Koka and Babi, converged on Kathiawar. They were loth to engage, if they could avoid it, in a war among the wild hills and forests of Nawanagar, so they sent a letter to Jam Sataji, hinting that they would be satisfied with his formal submission. The Jam shewed the letter to Prince Ajaji, who merely laughed and said:

“ Jaso Ladak will never agree to any pact with the Moghuls.”

The prince was right, for the wazir insisted on breaking off all negotiations. He wrote in his own hand:

“ Never will Jam Sataji yield to the Moghuls, even if the emperor were to invade Nawanagar in person.”

The Jam awaited the invaders on the frontiers of his state and so skilfully did he handle his troops, that for three months he kept the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

enemy at bay. Gradually the superior numbers and better artillery of the Moghuls forced the Jadejas to retreat until they came to the rolling uplands of Bhucharmori, the spot, as the birds had prophesied, destined to be the field of battle. Here Jam Sataji resolved to risk a pitched contest. The ground was suited to his splendid Rajput cavalry, and he hoped that their fiery charges would disperse the Delhi infantry and neutralize their artillery by sabring the gunners.

Unhappily there was a traitor in the Jadeja ranks. He was not a Rajput but a Kathi, that is one of the nomad race, descended from the ancient Sacae. He owned lands in fief to the Jam of Nawanagar and commanded twelve thousand horse, but he had no love for the Jadejas and he had sold himself to the Moghuls in the hope of increasing his holding, if they were victorious.

Before the battle opened, Loma Khuman went to Jam Sataji and said with insidious humility:

“ Jam Sahib, seated as you are on an elephant, you are exposed to gun and cannon fire from all sides. We shall all feel happier

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

if you get down from your elephant and mount a horse."

Jam Sataji, little suspecting treachery, told his mahout to make the animal kneel. He alighted from the howdah and mounted a horse. No sooner had the Jam left the howdah than Loma Khuman and his confederates galloped along the Jadeja lines, shouting:

"The Jam has fled! All is lost! Run for your lives! The Jam has fled!"

Not one of the true-hearted Rajputs heeded the traitor's words; but all the Kathis and many Musulmans in the service of the Jam galloped with Loma Khuman at full speed towards the Moghul headquarters.

The treachery of the Kathi clansmen left a gap in the Jadeja lines, which the wazir and his captains found it hard to fill. Nevertheless all that day they successfully repulsed the Moghul attacks. By evening the Jam's army was so reduced in numbers that even the lion-hearted Jaso Ladak began to fear defeat. His first care was to pray Jam Sataji to go back to Nawanagar, so that he might not fall a prisoner into the hands of the enemy. As

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

long as the Jam was free, he could hold out in the Bharda hills, just as the Sisodia Rajputs were holding out in the ravines of the Aravalis. It was no easy matter to make a Jam of Nawanagar leave the battlefield. Still he saw the reason of Jaso Ladak's request and reluctantly he rode back to his capital.

At once he sought Prince Ajaji, who was engaged in celebrating his marriage. The Jam did not disclose publicly the grounds of his return, but the prince guessed that there must have been some grave cause. He stopped the wedding, took his father aside and from him learnt the true facts:

“To-day then,” cried the gallant youth, “there is but one bride meet for a Jadeja Rajput and that is Victory!”

He took hasty leave of the marriage guests and, summoning all the Jadeja youth still in Nawanagar, he rode with them in hot haste to Bhucharmori. When he reached the Rajput lines, Jaso Ladak met him and resigned his command to the prince

“I thought you were to wed a princess,” said the brave wazir, “and I to make my marriage bed in battle. Since you have given

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

up your wedding, I resign you my bridal chamber."

All that day the battle went against the Jadejas. The old wazir, Jaso Ladak, and most of his captains fell in turn. At last Prince Ajaji adopted a counsel of despair. If the three Moghul commanders could be killed by a charge of horse, their army might be seized with panic as leaderless Indian armies often were. Ajaji divided his cavalry into two bodies. With one he would charge Azam. The other body under the wazir's brother, Nagro Ladak, should charge Koka. Then with what remained of the two commands, they should both bear down on Babi. Ajaji assembled a thousand horsemen. They were the very flower of the Jadeja youth. He bade them put on a saffron robe, so that all men should know that they would neither give nor take quarter. He divided them into two bodies of five hundred each and gave the order to charge. In two different directions the gallant bands went off at full gallop. Moghul cannon, Moghul horse and Moghul foot failed to check that irresistible attack. Ajaji almost alone reached Azam's elephant. Setting his steed

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

at the monster's head, the gallant beast contrived to find a foothold long enough for Ajaji to throw himself into Azam's howdah and drive his sword through the Moghul's heart. A moment later he was cut to pieces. In the same way Nagro Ladak reached Koka's elephant. He was a man of gigantic stature and great agility. His horse was shot under him, but climbing up by the howdah girths, he managed to stab Koka to death before he, too, succumbed.

So far the first part of Ajaji's design had succeeded but the second part failed. Of the two bands who should have joined to charge Babi, not a man remained unwounded. The third commander, with a veteran's experience, rallied his shaken troops and vigorously counter-attacked. The Jadeja army had lost both its leaders and its bravest units; they broke and fled. The losses of the Moghuls had been enormous, but they were able to enter Nawanager in triumph.

Gopal, one of the court bards, had fallen badly wounded off his horse, and had lain all night on the field of battle. His horse had at first galloped riderless home. Next morning

PRINCE AJAJI OF NAWANAGAR

it returned to the place where its master lay and with almost human intelligence found him and stood by him whinnying. With great difficulty Gopal was able to mount, and in spite of his wounds began to look for Jaso Ladak. He found the old wazir still alive but on the point of death. Jaso asked where Ajaji was. Gopal said that the prince had fallen, so he believed, at some little distance. The wazir said:

“ I am dying and as I die, I should like to hold in my hands some garment of my beloved prince. Then I shall feel that he and I will go together to Indra’s paradise.”

Gopal rode off and with some little difficulty found Ajaji lying dead close to the dead Moghul commander Azam. Gopal took Ajaji’s cloak and put it into the hands of Jaso Ladak:

“ Now I can die,” said the brave old man with a smile, “ but give this message from me to Jam Sataji. Let him never, never forget Loma Khuman! ”

In the meantime the Jam had ridden the Bharda mountains where he resisted with such success the Moghul arms, that in the end Akbar gave back to Sataji’s son, Lakhaji, the

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

throne of Nawanagar. This was a device to save the emperor's honour. The whole power returned into the hands of the old Jam¹ himself

Sataji died in 1608, but before his death he paid due heed to the last message of his dead wazir, Jaso Ladak. He sent his younger son, Jasoji, against Kharedi, the town of Loma Khuman. The prince took by storm the traitor's castle and slew him and all his family. Before he started homewards there was not a wall standing, nor a man nor a woman nor a child left alive in the accursed city of the Kathis

¹ My English readers will, I think, be interested to learn that the lineal descendant of Jam Sataji was the immortal "Ranji," the friend of the English and the idol of the crowds at Lords. Another descendant is His Highness the reigning Jam Sahib of Nawanagar

XII

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

WHEN the immortal Shivaji Bhosle, the liberator of the Maratha nation, was a little boy, he lived with his mother, Jijabai, and his tutor, Dadoji, in the small township of Poona, that nestled by the junction of the Muta and Mula rivers. His father had gone far to the south in the service of the king of Bijapur. So to beguile Shivaji's loneliness, Dadoji gathered round him other lads of his own age. One of them was Tanaji Malusre, the son of a petty baron of Umrathe village and the hero of this romantic tale.

When Shivaji grew to manhood he set his hand to the task of freeing his countrymen first from the tyranny of the kings of Bijapur and afterwards to that of thwarting the designs of the Moghul emperor, Aurangzib, who wished to reduce to slavery all southern India. In A.D. 1668 Shivaji made a treaty with Aurangzib, by which, in exchange of lands

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

elsewhere, he gave up two great strongholds near Poona, Sinhgad and Purandar. Two years later the faithless emperor tried treacherously to seize Shivaji, but the plot failed as it deserved, and war threatened between the Maratha king and the Moghuls. How it broke out has been told in the famous ballad of Tulsidas Shahr.

One Monday morning Shivaji's mother, Jijabai, was sitting in front of her palace at Pratabgad, one of her son Shivaji's forts. She was combing her hair and looking at the tremendous landscape that stretched round her. As she turned eastwards, her eyes fell on Sinhgad, or the Lion's Fort, that was shining in the winter sun like a new laid egg. The thought that it once belonged to her son and was now garrisoned by the treacherous Moghuls, goaded her to fury. She told one of her pages, Pantoji by name, to fetch Shivaji without delay:

“ Bid him come at once,” she cried, “ even if he has to rise from his dinner without washing his hands ”

The king was at Rajgad, in the Konkan, and directly the page reached the gates of that

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

mighty keep and delivered Jijabai's message, Shivaji donned his armour, mounted his mare, Krishna, and rode in all haste to Pratabgad. He rode up the steep hillside and through the gates and was at once escorted to his mother's rooms. There he asked the meaning of the urgent summons. She gave him no direct answer, but challenged him to a match of dice. Shivaji protested that a son should not oppose his mother even in a game, but at last he yielded. The match began, and Jijabai prayed silently to the goddess Bhawani,¹ who rules over the destinies of the Bhosle family:

“ Goddess Bhawani, help me to win the game at all costs.”

The goddess heard the prayer and so arranged it that the dice fell always in Jijabai's favour. The match was decided by three casts. The queen won all three and demanded as a forfeit one of her son's strongholds. The king replied heedlessly that she could choose any one she wished:

“ Take any one you wish, Visapur-Tung Tikona or even Rajgad.”

¹ Bhawani, or Parwati, is the queen of the great god Shiva, and may be termed the Juno of the Hindus. Bhosle was the family name of Shivaji.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

“I want none of those,” retorted Jijabai
“I want Sinhgad.”

To take Sinhgad, even if it were possible, was to declare war on the Moghuls, and Shivaji, who had known the frowns as well as the smiles of fortune, shrank from this.

“Sinhgad is not mine to give, my mother; it belongs to the emperor, it is held by a very strong garrison, commanded by a valiant soldier, Uday Bhan.”

The impetuous Jijabai would take no refusal:

“You told me to choose my fortress. I ask for Sinhgad and you refuse it me. If you do not keep your word I shall burn up your kingdom with my curses.”

Shivaji loved and revered the queen mother and feared her anger. He begged Jijabai to go with him to Rajgad, a neighbouring place of arms, and there he called on his leading captains to volunteer to take Sinhgad. Among the veterans gathered round him were many men who had already proved their courage; but to storm the strongest keep in the Deccan, defended by a strong Moghul garrison and a skilful commander such as Uday Bhan, was a task hard enough to dismay the bravest. In

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

vain Shivaji passed round the vidha or roll of betelnut, but none of his chiefs would take it; for to do so would mean that the taker accepted the perilous duty.

Shivaji, in despair, let his thoughts wander back to his boyhood and to the lads who had strayed and hunted and fought beside him among the forest-clad hills round Poona; but they were now all grown men and most sat in front of him and refused, like the others, to lead the forlorn hope. Then he suddenly thought of Tanaji Malusre, who was absent at his village of Umrathe, preparing for his son Rayaba's wedding.

"I have it," cried suddenly the king. "I shall send for Tanaji and he will not fail me."

Shivaji wrote out an appeal to the comrade of his early years and told him, as he loved him, to come with twelve thousand men to Rajgad in four days from the receipt of the letter. He gave the missive to Pantoji and bade him ride with it to Umrathe and hand it himself to the Konkan chieftain.

Tanaji read the king's despatch, but he was loth to put off his son's wedding festivities,

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

especially as his uncle, Shelar, and his son, Rayaba, protested; still he said:

“ If Shivaji, the king, wants us, go we must. Once we have performed the task set us it will be time for you, Rayaba, to complete your marriage.”

The lord of Umrathe sent a summons to all his farmers and bade them bring every man that they could raise. In this way he collected several thousand farmers and farm hands, but uncouth and illarmed, and led them to Rajgad. There he was led into Shivaji’s presence and with the turbulence of a Maratha noble he burst out:

“ What quarrel have you with me, my lord king, that you should make me come to Rajgad and make me postpone my son’s wedding? ”

Shivaji smiled and turning to his mother, said:

“ You will have to explain to him, Jijabai. You sent for him, not I ”

Jijabai sighed and prayed silently to Bhawani for help. Then she resolved to appeal to the chivalry of the grim Konkan baron:

“ I want you, Tanaji, to take Sinhgad Do this for me and I shall deem you as my own

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

son and as Shivaji's younger brother; a mother's prayers, too, will go with you."

As Jijabai spoke, she waved a silver lamp round his head and then blessed him, as she would have done had she really borne him. The chivalrous lord of Umrathe was completely won over. What mattered wounds or death to one who had been declared son of Jijabai and brother of his adored Shivaji. He took up the betel roll and set about preparing for the venture. The first task was to feed his men: Jijabai was ready to pay for the food, but how could she feed them all? She prayed once more to Bhawani and, so the legend relates, the goddess came in person with all her heavenly attendants and gave every soldier all, and more than all, that he needed not only for that day but for the whole campaign.

While the troops were feasting, Shivaji and Jijabai busied themselves in equipping them with shields, swords, maces and matchlocks. The rabble that had marched to Rajgad, hungry, unkempt and all but unarmed, left next day for Sinhgad a well-fed and well-equipped force.

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

Sinhgad is some fifteen miles or more from Rajgad. Tanaji's army camped about a mile from the base of the Lion's Fort. Tanaji himself went on alone, disguised as a Maratha headman, until he reached a hamlet on the slopes of Sinhgad hill. The villagers were of the Koli caste and were paid by Uday Bhan to warn him against a sudden attack. With rare skill Tanaji, still posing as a Maratha headman, undermined the loyalty of the Kolis. When by his silver speech he had won them over, he proclaimed himself a lieutenant of the great Shivaji. The Kolis were at first so frightened that they begged him to be gone. With soft words he calmed their fears and begged them to tell him all they knew about the fortress and where it could be best escaladed. Reluctantly the Kolis told him what they knew, but it was not worth much; for they exaggerated everything. Their account of the commandant Uday Bhan was terrific. He had eighteen wives. He ate every day a whole cow, an entire goat, and a cartload of rice. His lieutenant, Sidi Ballal, was a hardly less fearful personage. He had nine wives and ate each day a whole sheep,

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

half a cow and half a hundredweight of rice. Tanaji laughed lightly at these fairy tales and asked the Kolis where the fort could be scaled by a ghorpad, a large hill lizard trained for this purpose. They pointed to the eastern cliff as best suited for an escalade. Tanaji rewarded them and returned to his men.

The following night Tanaji led his army under the eastern cliff near what was known as the Kalyan gate. He took out of its box Yeshwant, Shivaji's famous ghorpad.¹ With its help the king had already taken twenty-seven fortresses. With a rope fastened round its waist it would run up the side of the ramparts and on reaching the top would fasten its claws firmly into the soil on top. A child would then clamber up the rope and peg into the ground a rope ladder by which the storming party mounted.

The ghorpad Yeshwant was duly petted and worshipped and, perfectly trained as it was, it at once began to climb the cliff. Half way, so the story runs, it had a vision that Tanaji would be killed in the coming fight.

¹ The chiefs of Mudhol bear the surname of Ghorpade because so it is said, they were the first to make effective use of this big hill lizard to escalade fortresses

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

It tried to turn back, but a sharp rebuke from Tanaji frightened it and it ran up the rampart. There it dug its claws into the ground; a small boy swarmed up the rope and arranged for the storming party a rope ladder. Unhappily when fifty men had reached the summit, the rope ladder, worn by friction against the rock, broke.

There was no time to waste. The noise of the Marathas clamouring to mount the rope had already made the Moghul sentry suspicious; and only a soothing answer from the Kolis below had stopped him from calling to the garrison.

Tanaji resolved to risk everything and attack at once. Nor was this mere rashness. There had been a festival that day, and most of the garrison were lying in a drunken stupor. If he and his men could overpower the guard at the Kalyan gate and open it so that the army might pass through, his enterprise might still succeed. In any event it was his only chance. If he waited and did nothing he would get no help in time and he and his comrades would be butchered like sheep.

Tanaji and his fifty men crawled to the

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

guardroom of the Kalyan gate and silently stabbed to the heart the Afghan guard, "as a tiger kills a herd of deer." He unlocked the heavy doors and throwing them wide open called to his soldiers to rush up the hill with all the speed they could. It is a long way from the base of Sinhgad to the summit, and while the Marathas were running breathlessly up the rough hill path, Uday Bhan and his garrison learnt what had happened. The commandant, who had drunk heavily, was unwilling to go himself. He sent first his war elephant, then Sidi Ballal his lieutenant and finally his twelve sons to fight against Tanaji. When the Maratha chieftain had killed them all in turn, Uday Bhan forced himself to go to meet the invader.

Fearing that if he fell in battle his wives would be dishonoured, Uday Bhan killed them and rushed out to restore the fight. By this time Tanaji was spent with giving and receiving blows; in any case he was probably no match for the skill of the commandant, a famous swordsman. A tremendous cut from Uday Bhan broke through Tanaji's guard and clove alike helmet and head. Hemmed in on

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

all sides and their leader dead, the storming party was in sore peril. Bhawani, who was a witness of the scene, remembered Jijabai's prayers and the devotion of the Bhosle house. She called to the main body of the Marathas to hasten and inspired the remnant of the storming party to superhuman efforts. At last the relieving force passed through the Kalyan gate and their comrades were saved. Against the twelve thousand fresh troops, led by Tanaji's brother Suryaji, the Sinhgad garrison could make but little resistance. Uday Bhan died fighting; on his death his men turned and fled. They were cut down to a man and the fort was in Maratha hands.

The Moghul flag was hauled down and the orange banner of Shivaji rose to take its place. Five salvos from the cannon of Sinhgad conveyed to Shivaji the welcome news that Tanaji had won Sinhgad and that he could now pay his forfeit to Jijabai. He fired in reply a salute of ten guns from Rajgad and rode hard to Sinhgad. Jijabai followed in her palanquin.

When the king reached the gate of the conquered stronghold he met twelve soldiers,

TANAJI MALUSRE OF UMRATHE

who carried on a litter the corpse of Tanaji Malusre. They were taking it back to Umrathe. He stopped the procession until his mother joined him and both mother and son wept for the gallant knight who had lost his life to do their bidding.

“I have not won the Lion’s fort,” said Shivaji bitterly. “I have won the fort, but I have lost the lion!”

The king, turning from Sinhgad, accompanied the dead knight to Umrathe. There Rayaba saw them coming and rejoiced, thinking that his father was coming home in triumph. Soon, to his dismay, he learnt that it was his dead sire returning to be burnt in Umrathe, as his ancestors had been.

The king comforted as best he could the sorrowing lad, and since the postponed marriage, because of the calamity that had fallen, could no longer be celebrated, he chose for Rayaba another wife and bestowed on her a dowry such as no baron of the Konkan had ever received with a bride before

Afterwards he sent for the most skilled stone masons in the land of the Marathas and bade them erect a monument to Tanaji’s

TALES OF THE INDIAN CAVALIERS

memory on the summit of Sinhgad. It still stands for all men to see close to the Kalyan gate; and if the English visitor can by good fortune speak Marathi, any of those who dwell within that mighty mountain stronghold will gladly relate to him with many picturesque additions, the tale how Tanaji won the Lion's fortress for their national hero, Shivaji the king

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